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Sarah Glazer

Welfare: An Evaluation

Welfare Reform—Four Years Later — *Douglas J. Besharov & Peter Germanis*

The Lessons of W-2 — *Amy L. Sherman*

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Postmodern nursing

SARAH GLAZER

IN the late 1980s, Linda A. Rosa, a registered nurse working in Denver, Colorado, was deluged with brochures promoting courses for nurses in crystal healing, color therapy, and a technique called "therapeutic touch," derived from the laying-on of hands. All the courses fulfilled the continuing education credits then required for state relicensure of nurses in Colorado, but none appeared to have any scientific basis. Aghast at this antiscientific trend in nursing, Rosa began to investigate the research and claims behind therapeutic touch.

Therapeutic touch is a technique with roots in Eastern mysticism. Its practitioners claim to heal people without actually touching them by "smoothing out" energy fields, which they contend extend a few inches out from the body. There is no evidence that such a phenomenon exists, and experts con-

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sider it implausible. Rosa's crusade to expose what she has described as "silly nursing" culminated in a widely publicized article in 1998 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. After reviewing hundreds of reports on the technique, Rosa and her coauthors concluded, "No well-designed study demonstrates any health benefit from therapeutic touch."

The article also reported the results of her daughter Emily's fourth-grade science project, which tested whether practitioners of the technique could actually sense a "human energy field," as they claim. Emily asked 21 therapeutic-touch practitioners to guess whether she was holding her hand above their right or left hand. A screen hid Emily's hand from the healer's view to provide blinded conditions. The healers' ability to guess the correct hand (44 percent of the time) was slightly worse than random chance. The article concluded that therapeutic-touch claims "are groundless and that further use of Therapeutic Touch by health professionals is unjustified."

Yet therapeutic touch continues to be an entrenched technique in nursing, endorsed at the highest levels of the profession. Nursing journals continue to publish articles claiming positive health effects for therapeutic touch and enthusiastically encouraging its use with patients. The American Nurses' Association (ANA), the main professional organization, responded to Rosa's *JAMA* article by publishing a lead editorial defending therapeutic touch, written by the nurse who introduced the technique into the profession in the early 1970s. Dolores Krieger, professor emerita of nursing at New York University, denounced the study as a "parlor game" and said therapeutic touch had been the target of "reactionary forces whose viewpoints are embedded in materialistic and reductionist philosophies." The same issue of the ANA's official journal ran an enthusiastic article on "healing touch," a variation of therapeutic touch, with this come-on headline: "Take a closer look at one of the 'energetic' therapies. It might just recharge your practice."

Therapeutic touch is taught at more than 100 colleges and universities around the world. It is used by nurses in at least 80 hospitals in North America. Proponents claim that at least 43,000 health-care professionals have been trained in the tech-

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nique. The National League for Nursing, the agency that accredits nursing schools in the United States, has promoted the technique through books and videotapes. A past president, Jean Watson, is a prominent advocate. The North American Nursing Diagnosis Association names therapeutic touch as the only appropriate treatment for a diagnosis it dubs "energy field disturbance." It defines energy field disturbance as "a disruption of the flow of energy surrounding a person's being which results in disharmony of the body, mind, and/or spirit."

Therapeutic touch is not the only holistic healing technique adopted by nurses, but it is probably the most widely recognized and used. A nurse casting about for a way to fulfill the continuing education requirements in the state of Michigan in 1996 could attend workshops that promised to teach her how to "sense angelic presence," understand "the human aura," and "contact people who have passed over." Workshops in these techniques carry the approval of the National League for Nursing.

Scientific mysticism

How have techniques steeped in mysticism gained such a foothold in the nursing profession? Ironically, their acceptance has coincided with another movement within the profession toward enhancing the scientific foundation and orientation of nursing practice. In the early 1990s, organizations like the ANA were lobbying federal legislators to treat their most highly trained nurses on an equal level with doctors for reimbursement from federal and private health insurers. Their lobbying effort focused on an elite group of "advanced practice nurses"—nurses who hold master's degrees or specialty certification permitting them to practice as nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, or certified nurse anesthetists, among other specialties. At the time, nursing association leaders pointed proudly to advanced practice nurses who operated in solo practices in rural areas and impoverished inner-city neighborhoods. Much like doctors, they conducted examinations and doled out prescriptions—with a distant doctor's telephone authorization. Unlike doctors, they put a premium on spending time with patients, listening to them, and providing more patient education. Nurses with Ph.D.s in academia were also

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calling attention to their research that used scientific methods to come up with innovative recommendations for nursing care distinct from traditional medical studies.

As a health journalist who had written an article in 1992 for the *Washington Post* on nursing's rising professional status, I was surprised to discover that therapeutic touch had been embraced by the same mainstream nursing organizations where I had just been interviewing leaders. As I researched the bizarre history and claims of the therapeutic-touch movement, its respectful treatment by nurses seemed even more puzzling. Proponents cited studies claiming that the technique could speed growth in plants and healing in animals. In humans, claims for its benefits ranged from relieving pain from burns to helping to bring the dead back to life. Its founder, Dolores Krieger, drew on Eastern and Western traditions of mysticism. In her book *Therapeutic Touch,* she acknowledged her debt to Dora Kunz, a former president of the mystical-religious Theosophical Society, for deriving the method from the laying-on of hands. Initially, Krieger described therapeutic touch's crucial mechanism as *prana,* a traditional Indian concept of "life force." She argued that the healer manipulated "pranic current" through her intention to help or heal an ill person.

Early in the movement's history, however, the explanation for therapeutic touch shifted to Western-sounding terminology with a physics veneer. Martha Rogers, dean of nursing at New York University, claimed that humans do not merely possess energy fields but *are* energy fields, which constantly interact with the "environmental field" around them. She dubbed her approach the "Science of Unitary Human Beings." Delving into one of her articles on why therapeutic touch is "efficacious" feels like an excursion into science fiction coupled with mysticism.

"The ability to explain precognition, *déjà vu*, and clairvoyance becomes a rational process in pandimensional human and environmental fields," Rogers writes of her unitary science perspective. "Within this science such occurrences become 'normal' rather than 'paranormal.'" Rogers claims that the unique perspective of the Science of Unitary Human Beings legitimates alternative forms of healing such as therapeutic touch,

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which is otherwise inexplicable using traditional scientific methods. Rogers's jumps of logic from one concept to another are hard to follow, but her general gist is that traditional science is no longer applicable because, as she says, "humankind is on the threshold of a new cosmology transcending an earthbound past."

In the same article, Rogers predicts that humans are on the verge of evolving within about 50 years into what she calls "Homo Spatialis"—an adaptation to space living—and that accelerating evolution explains today's phenomenon of hyperactivity in children. In a foreshadowing of more sophisticated philosophical rationales made by nurses for abandoning scientific method, Rogers misuses systems theory to eliminate causality as a part of her brand of science. "In a universe of open systems," Rogers writes, "causality is not an option." Wacky as she sounds, Rogers continues to be cited respectfully today in nursing journal articles on a variety of subjects, and almost all therapeutic-touch discussions are based on Rogers's concepts.

Nurses of the world unite

Rogers's article praising the paranormal was published in 1992, the same year that nursing leaders were positioning themselves as mainstream providers of health care. In some ways, the two movements seem as far apart as could be. But as I became more familiar with the players in both movements—therapeutic touch and science-based nursing training—I detected a common theme. In both movements, nurses were seeking a professional identity that would distinguish them from doctors yet provide equal status in a realm of their own. Indeed, much like nurse practitioners, nurses trained in therapeutic touch often set themselves up in private practice as independent healers. In both movements, there was a revolt against doctors' power in the hospital structure and against doctors' perceived disdain for nurses. Nurses argued that doctors neglected patients' emotional needs, ignored the importance of patients' feelings in evaluating treatments, and undervalued nurses' expertise in this area.

The increasingly militant tone of nurses could be heard in 1992 in their demands for the authority to write prescriptions and the right to be reimbursed directly by Medicare, Medic-

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aid, and private insurance carriers. The American Medical Association (AMA), representing 300,000 of the nation's doctors, publicly opposed giving nurses such authority, saying they were inadequately trained. Lucille Joel, then president of the American Nurses' Association, defiantly disputed the AMA's view that doctors were, as she put it, "the captain of the ship." Joel argued that patients should have "access to a variety of providers" with the financial freedom to choose a nurse practitioner over a doctor. An increasingly feminist tone could also be heard that year in the midst of Senate hearings on sexual harassment charges against Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas. I recall the warm response from the all-female convention of nursing school deans when National League for Nursing president Claire M. Fagin attacked the senators as men in power who just "didn't get it."

Resentment against doctors as a male-dominated oppressor group, colored by a strong feminist perspective, continues to drive nursing scholars' arguments that their profession has been insufficiently appreciated for its unique "caring" approach. Central to this perspective is the view that nursing is a humanistic profession and that caring has benefits distinct from the "curing" mission of doctors. A typical example of this argument can be found in a 1996 article in the *International Journal of Nursing Studies* by Patricia E.B. Valentine, who is on the faculty of nursing at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, in Canada. Valentine argues that nursing, as a female-dominated field, has been a "ghettoized," demeaned profession because it is associated with traditional female, domestic values like caring rather than skill.

> Nursing's affiliation with domesticity contributed to hospitals becoming symbolic homes where male physicians became authority figures who generally have been unsupportive and often hostile toward increased status for nurses. In hospitals where the majority of nurses work, a ghetto culture is supported by both parties. The female (nursing) world, based strongly on caring is usually invisible to the male (physician) world based mainly on curing. Even though nurses and doctors worked side by side ... physicians rarely treat nurses as equals but rather remain in the dominant role with nurses usually acceding ... to their demands.

What has kept nurses from demanding equality, according to

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Valentine, is nurses' fear of doctors or their tendency to idealize the medical profession, both conditions that "serve to maintain the oppression of nurses."

Caring plus science

The nursing profession has taken two very different roads to the goal of separate and equal professional status. The first road I would describe as the "Caring plus Science" path. Nurse advocates have argued that "caring," rather than curing, is a highly beneficial characteristic of nursing that is often missing from the cold, increasingly technological world of modern Western medicine. In fact, they have argued, the effect of a "caring" nurse on a patient is so powerful that it can often be an essential part of the ultimate cure. Depending on who is talking about it, the concept of "caring" in nursing can range from a nurse holding a patient's hand by the bedside to giving an expert massage to administering the right kind of pain medicine. It has also involved research into such issues as how a patient's sense of self or level of optimism will affect recovery from surgery.

Nurses in this school of thought have employed traditional scientific methods and experimental designs to try to determine what kind of caring is most effective in helping patients. For example, in 1990, a Ph.D. nurse, Sandra J. Weiss of the School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, reported that if nurses gently touched or massaged heart-disease patients in the hospital, their heart rates decelerated and blood pressure was lowered. By comparison, simply talking to patients in a sympathetic way had no effect on heart rate or blood pressure. The finding is significant because nurses can use the technique to convert patients' irregular heart rhythms to regular heart rhythms without resorting to a drug that can cause complications of its own. The study used a standard scientific technique, randomly assigning patients to the different methods of talking, stroking, or touching-plus-talking in varied sequences. In her analysis of the results, Weiss reflected nurse researchers' broad interest in the effect that a compassionate atmosphere could have had on the patients' responses:

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> [Patients'] spontaneous verbal responses suggested that most patients perceived the entire experience as a supportive expression of caring that was calming and comforting to them. They described the nurse as being fully present, available, attentive and completely focused on their person rather than the technology surrounding them.

Against science

Yet the promise held out by the movement toward advanced nursing education—that nurse researchers would discover through scientific means which aspects of caring were most effective—was not entirely fulfilled. True, many Ph.D. dissertations in nursing have continued to use standard research methods to investigate such concrete questions as the benefits of exercise for heart-failure patients or whether there are gender differences in the experience of pain relief. But in another ideological camp, nurses with advanced degrees have essentially become postmodern nurse-theorists, who cite an impressive-sounding array of philosophers to support their abandonment of Western science. In article after article in current issues of nursing journals, these nurses advocate discarding standard scientific methods and introducing an entirely new paradigm, often dubbed "qualitative research." Advocates argue that the qualitative approach, which generally relies entirely on patients' or nurses' comments—known as "the narrative" in postmodern lingo—is better attuned to hearing patients' needs and arriving at effective caring than "quantitative" investigation.

For these nurses, words like "reality," "objective," "evidence-based practice," "quantitative research," and even "measurement" have become code words for all that is evil, patriarchal, and insensitive about modern science and modern medicine. In their place, they have substituted the fashionable phrases of feminism, postmodernism, and hermeneutics: "constructed reality," "social construction," "lived experience," and—to a baffling extent—such terms as "phenomenology" and "epistemology."

Nursing is divided into two warring camps. Nowhere is that better demonstrated than in a fictional dialogue recently composed by two Ph.D. nurses from the antiscience faction. The

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dialogue was published in the October 1999 issue of *Nursing Science Quarterly*, which has become a repository for science-bashing together with some of the profession's nuttier quasi-scientific theories. In the dialogue, a fictitious researcher of the "natural science" school (read old-fashioned science) attempts to recruit a fictitious researcher who represents the "human science paradigm," the holistic antiscience view to which the authors subscribe.

At the outset, the "human science" nurse announces that she cannot possibly collaborate on research with the "natural science" researcher because their worldviews are so different. As readers, we can tell immediately that the natural science researcher is the bad guy (girl) because she believes in "an objective reality ... measurement, control ... theory testing and inference making." The human science researcher is the good guy, who believes in "constructed reality, mutual process and epistemological notions of description, pattern, interpretation ... and participation."

The human science researcher views patients' comments as taking primacy over all other types of research data. She asserts proudly, "I believe that quality of life is exactly what the person describes it as being, and I would accept the participants' accounts as truth." In contrast, she says accusingly of old-fashioned science: "When you reduce persons to numerical representations, you strip them of all meaning." She bewails the tendency for peer reviewers (presumably at stodgier journals than *Nursing Science Quarterly*) to penalize nurse researchers who fail to employ standard methods like a hypothesis, controls, or discussions of the reliability and validity of their methods and data. Just in case there's any doubt about who wins this ideological battle, Violet M. Malinski, R.N., Ph.D., associate professor at Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing, Hunter College, New York, comments approvingly that the authors "show the flaw in the argument for evidence-based practice."

As part of these culture wars, nurse practitioners—initially regarded within the profession as the peak of skilled accomplishment—have come in for criticism from the antiscience camp. Nurse practitioners are in danger of giving in to "the temptation to mimic physicians" and of becoming too partial

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to "causal biomedical thinking," charges Hunter College R.N. Ph.D. Steven L. Baumann. By contrast, Baumann praises those nurse practitioners who are not biomedically oriented, who "rely less on diagnostic testing," and who buy into a worldview that "reveals the limits of reductionistic cause-effect thinking." Such nurse practitioners, he argues approvingly, are more likely to "respect alternative healing modalities and folkways." From there it's a short leap of faith for Baumann to defend nurse practitioners who integrate therapeutic touch into their practice.

Philosophical radicalism

Nurse-scholars engaged in a war against the medical establishment and its research methods have developed increasingly sophisticated-sounding arguments, marshaling thinkers from philosophy, feminism, and social theory. A review of the nursing literature in recent years reflects "our inclination to adopt a philosopher of the month," writes Susan R. Gortner, professor of nursing emerita at the University of California, San Francisco, and an outspoken advocate for the importance of scientific evaluation and biology in nursing. "Our first white knight," according to Gortner, was Thomas Kuhn, whose studies of accepted scientific theories led him to conclude that major upheavals or "paradigm shifts" resulted not just from conventional scientific reasoning but also from social influences and individual whims. Nurses of the postmodern cast have cited Kuhn to support an oversimplified version of his findings: that there is no benefit from scientific method and there are no laws of nature to be discovered. (Defenders of science have since noted that this is a vulgarization of the ideas put forward by Kuhn, who did indeed believe that scientific methods have produced genuine discoveries about the nature of the universe.) From Kuhn, nurses have moved on to citing such postmodern critics of science as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault as well as the philosophers who influenced them—Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl. Between 1997 and 1999, 94 articles appeared in nursing journals making reference to postmodernism, typically approvingly.

In many ways, of course, the trends in nursing scholarship have mimicked the "science wars" taking place in departments

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of literature, philosophy, women's studies, and the social sciences. Nurses working toward their Ph.D.s are exposed through the nursing curriculum, as well as through courses in other departments, to the postmodern critique. In nursing journal articles and Ph.D. theses, that critique is often boiled down to the simple statement that all scientific discoveries and methods, being socially constructed and largely determined by the power of an oppressive elite, are of equal value. In many ways, that critique is ready-made for graduate-degree nurses chafing under the authority of doctors and resentful that their personal knowledge of patients' emotional life is given short shrift in the medical arena. They seek an equally exalted platform for presenting their findings about the interaction between a person's inner life and health.

Nurses searching for professional distinctiveness have plugged into a philosophical tradition that declares there is no absolute truth—one that they frequently dub the "post-positivist" position. Nurses who have adopted the relativist view in its most simplistic form have simply taken it to its natural conclusion: If science does not represent truth, then anything goes. Anything can include therapeutic touch, the Science of Unitary Human Beings, or communicating with the dead.

The workaday nurse who has learned therapeutic touch from her nursing supervisor in the hospital has probably never heard of Foucault. But critics inside the nursing profession see postmodernism as the theoretical axe that keeps therapeutic touch in vogue. One of the most vocal critics of therapeutic touch, Donal P. O'Mathuna, a professor of bioethics and chemistry at Mt. Carmel College of Nursing, Columbus, Ohio, calls postmodernism the "Trojan Horse" that has brought questionable practices like therapeutic touch "to prominence and acceptability on campuses today." The postmodern assertion that scientific methodology is nothing more than a cultural bias means that "bad research carries as much weight as properly structured and controlled studies."

O'Mathuna boils down the postmodern argument against scientific method in the nursing world to three basic points. Biochemical medicine is "materialistic, male-dominated and cold." Alternative medicine is the product of an oppressed minority culture in the West. Objective experimental data

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should be replaced with personal experience as the basis for therapy. Because Western science is morally and philosophically bankrupt, the postmodern nursing view argues, alternative healing cannot even be evaluated with scientific techniques. Larry Dossey, a proponent of therapeutic touch and editor of the journal *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, exemplifies this kind of philosophical name-calling. Newer alternative therapies, he asserts, "seem to have no possibility even in principle of being explained in the local, physicalistic, reductionistic framework" of modern medicine.

The themes of societal oppression (in this case, doctors' domination of nurses), scientific relativism, and the inhumanity of modern science echo throughout a 1995 essay by Jean Watson, a former president of the National League of Nursing and professor of nursing at the University of Colorado, a hotbed of therapeutic touch. Watson sees nursing's evolution "into its own postmodern paradigm" as a way of returning the profession to its historical roots as a caring profession and turning away from strict rationalist approaches. Citing Derrida's and Foucault's insistence that claims to knowledge are really claims to power, Watson comes to the nihilistic conclusion that since "there is no one way of knowing, being, and experiencing reality" and since "the rationalist model does not fit," any way of describing reality is as good as any other.

In drawing a contrast to rationalism, Watson's language often falls apart into free-flowing poetic imagery, leaving the reader in a kind of New Age daze. At the same time, the article could be a glossary for postmodernism. Watson argues that all knowledge is constructed, that nursing must move from a "strict rationalist" view toward the values of "ambiguity, poetic, aesthetic and imaginary [sic]," toward hermeneutics, and finally toward nursing's "most ancient" healing knowledge (presumably techniques like therapeutic touch) in addition to modern skills. In a wholesale embrace of relativism, Watson writes:

> The art and science of nursing with its concern with caring-healing and health as a field of study, research, and practice within its own paradigm is realizing that in this postmodern time, science, knowledge, and even images of nursing, health, environment, person become one among many truth games.

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Foucault's argument that claims to knowledge by experts in fields like medicine are actually claims to power fits perfectly into the view many nurses have of doctors as pompous bullies who devalue nurses' bedside experience. In one article criticizing science-based nursing, the nurse-authors employ Foucault's assertion that power relations underlay the claim to scientific objectivity to attack several nursing textbooks as overly medical. The nursing texts, the authors complain, provide "rules for care based on human anatomical systems, using scientific 'facts'" instead of an emphasis on "the subjective meanings" of the patient and the nurse's practical reasoning. The power of scientific discourse, the authors charge, is stifling nurses, often with their own compliance. "Nurses' ability to speak about their knowledge is constrained by dominant practices, such as medical notes, medical consultation and the consequent silencing and invalidation of nursing knowledge within the hospital setting."

A true science of care

Nurses make some good points about the medical profession's tendency to overlook the emotional consequences of medical practice. For example, some cite the years of strident campaigns by cancer specialists promoting universal mammograms as the best way to detect and prevent cancer. Until recently, oncologists gave short shrift to the subjective, but very real, trauma of mammograms to the women themselves: the emotional distress caused by inordinately high false-positive readings; the sometimes unnecessary biopsies ordered as a result; and unnecessary mastectomies for harmless lesions that look like cancer in mammograms. These drawbacks are most pronounced for women under 50, for whom mammograms are far less reliable than for older women.

The much higher emotional cost and limited medical benefits for younger women received official recognition in 1997, when an expert panel appointed by the National Institutes of Health found insufficient evidence to recommend population-wide screening for women in their forties. Breast self-examination, a nontechnological approach, may well be more cost-effective in detecting cancer while causing less distress to women. Yet despite recent criticisms by blue-ribbon panels

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that mammography has been oversold, self-examinations have not received the same level of funding or promotional support from the medical establishment or government agencies.

What the nurse critics ignore is that reaching the right answer requires not just compassion but also scientific rigor. Statistically trained experts, who did not share oncologists' almost ideological fervor about mammography, were the first to raise questions about the technique's ability to detect cancer accurately. Cancer doctors can be just as emotional about their patients as nurses, to such an extent that it blinds them to the data. In the mammography debate, it has been oncologists and radiologists, relying on anecdotal memory about the patients they have "saved" through mammography, who have been the true believers. Epidemiologists, who take a skeptical look at the data, have been the ones noting the modest percentage of lives saved by mammography and thus putting into greater relief the emotional disadvantages to women for whom there is little medical benefit.

In setting science against humanism, nurse-theorists seem to have forgotten that there is still an important biological component in nursing. The postmodern critiques focusing on power relationships, gender, and class may help us to understand nursing in its social aspects. But nursing is also rooted in biological reality. Unless it goes totally postmodern, that dimension of nursing will remain crucial.

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Welfare reform—four years later

DOUGLAS J. BESHAROV & PETER GERMANIS

FOUR years ago this August, a Republican Congress pushed a reluctant President Clinton to sign a bill that ended welfare as we had known it. But since the 1996 welfare-reform act expires on September 30, 2002, its eventual fate is not yet clear. Much will depend on how the law's impact is viewed. So far, it certainly seems to be a success. By June 1999, welfare rolls had fallen an amazing 49 percent from their historic high of five million families in March 1994. That's nearly seven and a half million fewer parents and children on welfare.

It has suited the purposes of both the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress to claim that "welfare reform" has caused this dramatic decline—and that over two million former recipients are now working because of the new law. But that's not quite true. The strong economy—and massively increased aid to the working poor—almost certainly have had more impact than welfare reform per se. Moreover, as many as 40 percent of the mothers who left welfare are not

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working regularly but are instead relying on support from boyfriends, family members or friends, and other government and private programs.

Both liberals and conservatives have found it convenient to ignore this reality—conservatives because it gives the "Clinton economy" and the president's success in expanding aid to the working poor too much credit and Republican welfare reform too little, and liberals because it suggests that many welfare recipients didn't "really need" government benefits. But the failure to be clear about why the rolls have declined so much prevents an accurate accounting of the law's impact—and what needs to be done next.

Welfare's rise and fall

For nearly 60 years, it seemed that welfare rolls could only grow. With the exception of a few short-lived declines, the rolls grew from 147,000 families in 1936 to about 5 million in 1994, from less than 1 percent of all American families with children to about 15 percent.

Between 1963 and 1973, there was a striking 230 percent increase—not because of a bad economy (unemployment was actually quite low during most of this period) nor simply because of an increase in family breakdown (both divorce and illegitimacy were rising, though not nearly as fast as the welfare caseload). Rather, the increase was largely the result of programmatic changes that made it easier for income-eligible families to get benefits, as well as the destigmatization of being on welfare. Where once welfare agencies discouraged applicants (by pressing them to seek other means of support or by imposing a grueling eligibility process), the obstacles to enrollment were now lowered. New York City's rolls almost tripled in only five years (between 1965 and 1970) under liberal mayor John Lindsay. The same liberalization was taking place across the nation, as welfare came to be seen more as a "right" than as a temporary safety net. Some of the drive behind this national movement was undoubtedly the long-overdue repeal of Jim Crow-like rules in the South that kept African-American mothers off welfare.

After this liberalization, caseloads stayed roughly steady for almost 15 years. They rose again, by 34 percent, between

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1989 and 1994, largely because of the weak economy. But there were other important causes: a spike in out-of-wedlock births among some groups; an increase in immigrants applying for means-tested benefits, either for themselves or their American-born children; half-a-decade's outreach efforts to get single mothers to sign up for Medicaid (and thence welfare benefits); and an increase in child-only cases, perhaps as a result of the spread of crack addiction among mothers and an increase in cases of parental disability.

Regardless of what caused rolls to rise in the past, they rarely fell back very far. Thus no one predicted the recent halving of welfare since 1994. Fifteen states have had declines of over 60 percent; three report declines of 85 percent or more. Indeed, almost everywhere, welfare rolls are way down and work is way up. For example, never-married mothers, the group most prone to long-term welfare dependency, were 40 percent more likely to be working in 1999 than in 1994. What's responsible for the decline in welfare and the increase in work?

The end of welfare as we know it

In 1992, Barbara Sabol, then New York City's welfare commissioner, visited two of her own welfare offices dressed in a "sweatshirt, jeans, and scarf or wig." She told the welfare workers she needed a job in order to care for her children. But try as she would, she could not get the workers to help her find a job.

The same year, candidate Bill Clinton showed that he was a New Democrat by ambiguously promising to "end welfare as we know it." After the election, his administration granted many state waivers that, among other things, toughened work requirements and imposed partial time limits on benefits—ultimately culminating in the Republican-inspired 1996 welfare-reform law.

The Republican bill bore a superficial resemblance to what Clinton proposed, so both sides were able to claim credit for reforming welfare. But the changes in welfare were largely based on the Republican plan. While both bills imposed time limits on benefits, the Clinton proposal included an entitlement to a public job afterward. The Republican bill had no such entitlement, and also transformed the program into a capped block grant, which gave states an incentive to cut

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caseloads because they would get to keep any unexpended funds.

Today, Sabol would find that welfare workers are eager to find jobs for their clients. Across the nation, the culture of welfare offices has changed—from places where mothers are signed up for benefits (with almost no questions asked) to places where they are helped, cajoled, and, yes, pressured to get a job or rely on others for support. The U.S. General Accounting Office described the change this way:

> Under states' welfare reform programs, participation requirements are being imposed sooner than under JOBS [the old welfare regime], with many states requiring participation in job search activities immediately upon application for assistance. Before reform, recipients could wait months—or even years—before being required to participate, and many never were required to participate because of the lack of sufficient services and staff.

Many welfare offices are now "job centers," where workers help applicants and recipients find employment. Depending on the office, they teach how to write résumés and handle job interviews; provide access to word processors, fax machines, telephones, and even clothes; offer career counseling and financial-planning services; and refer applicants to specific employers with job openings. In a survey of former welfare recipients in Texas who left the rolls in December 1996, over 60 percent said the welfare agency "gave me the kind of help I needed."

Some of this is boosterism, plain and simple, with welfare workers giving young mothers the moral support they so often need. As one caseworker said, "Some of these women never thought that they could get a job. We give them the confidence to try." But the assistance also can be quite concrete. Besides large expansions in Medicaid and child care, many states provide cash assistance to families on welfare to help them leave or stay off. These payments range from a few hundred dollars to over $2,000. For example, Texas provides stipends to help such families pay for employment-related expenses, such as transportation, education, and training. Virginia gives transportation allowances for up to a year after leaving welfare. And about a dozen states have created or expanded EITC-like tax credits for low-income families which can be used for any purpose.

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In a real break from the past, however, few welfare agencies seem to put any stock in job training. Administrative data from the states indicate that less than 2 percent of adult welfare recipients are in some sort of formal job-training program. Instead, agencies emphasize immediate job placement and on-the-job work experience. This gives mothers much-needed work experience, but it also adds to the pressure they feel to leave welfare or not apply for it in the first place. For there is also a sharper edge to welfare reform.

In most places, the welfare application process has a new element: "diversion." Diversion is a straightforward effort to keep families off welfare. It is encapsulated in two simple questions now asked of welfare applicants: Have you looked for a job? Can someone else support you? Many welfare agencies maintain a bank of phones that applicants must use to call as many as 20 potential employers before they can even apply for benefits. When told of these requirements, many applicants simply turn around and walk out.

In New York City's "Job Centers," for example, all applicants are encouraged to look for work (and offered immediate cash support for child care) or to seek support from relatives or other sources. Those who still decide to apply for welfare are required to go through a 30-day assessment period during which they complete the application process and undergo a rigorous job-readiness and job-search regimen involving many sessions at the Job Center and other offices. At the end of this period, eligible able-bodied adults who choose to receive assistance are required to participate in the city's workfare program. As a result, New York City officials estimate that the percentage of mothers entering these Job Centers who are eventually enrolled has fallen by about 40 percent, from about half to about a third of applicants.

The hassle factor

Being on welfare has also changed but not as much as many people think. When welfare reform was being considered by the Congress, most analysts expected the states to establish large, mandatory work programs in order to satisfy the bill's "participation" requirements. However, because those requirements were set in relation to 1995 caseloads, the sharp

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decline in the rolls since then has obviated the need for such programs—and few places beyond Wisconsin and New York City have established them.

Instead, almost all states require recipients to sign "self-sufficiency agreements" describing their plan for becoming self-sufficient within a specified time frame. Iowa, for example, requires all able-bodied recipients without infant children to develop and sign a Family Investment Agreement. Failure to sign or comply with this agreement can result in immediate and complete termination of cash assistance. About 10 percent of those who begin this process seem to have their benefits terminated for failure to sign or comply with the agreement.

In addition, most states now impose various behavior-related rules. Parents are required to have their children immunized and to send them to school; in a few places, mothers and fathers must even attend family or parenting skills classes. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in the welfare grant being reduced—and, in about 37 states, even terminated. According to state administrative data, in 1998, 6.2 percent (or 180,000) of the 2.9 million families that left welfare did so after a sanction. In some states, the percentage was as high as 30 percent.

These and other new requirements raise what economists would call the "cost" of being on welfare. By a rough calculation that assumes recipients value their time at the minimum wage, these kinds of requirements can reduce the advantage of being on welfare versus working by about 50 percent. In very low-benefit states, the advantage can fall to zero.

This amounts to the reintroduction of a long-gone aspect of being on welfare, "hassle." And it clearly leads some welfare recipients to seek other ways of supporting themselves. When these new requirements are explained to applicants and recipients, they often say things like: "I guess I might as well get a real job" or "I might as well move back home." Or they just walk out of the office—or stop responding to warnings that they will lose their benefits if they do not participate in work-related activities.

In the 1996 Texas survey of former recipients, about a quarter said that important factors for leaving were either "unfriendly caseworkers" or "new program requirements." And

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in a survey of those who left welfare in South Carolina between January and March of 1997, 60 percent said they felt "hassled," and 13 percent said that is why they left. About a third said that the state's welfare program "wants to get rid of people, not help them." A similar survey was conducted in Wisconsin for those who left welfare in 1998, and the results were about the same. (Of course, hassle may have led others to leave welfare, though they cited some other reason, such as finding a job.)

These are dramatic changes in welfare, and it is natural to assume that they are responsible for recent caseload declines. But welfare reform has coincided with the strongest economy in at least three decades, coupled with an unprecedented increase in aid to the working poor. The increased returns for low-skilled work are probably as responsible for the decline in welfare, and perhaps more so.

Work pays

The strong economy, most experts agree, has played a key role in the welfare declines. The rolls started falling in 1994, two years before the enactment of the 1996 welfare law, and before the welfare waivers that allowed some states to "get tough" on welfare recipients could have had much impact. The weak economic conditions that helped drive up welfare rolls during the Bush presidency ended a few months before George Bush left office (not soon enough, of course, to affect the election). Since January 1993, the economic news has been truly remarkable: Real per capita Gross Domestic Product up about 25 percent in real dollars, 20 million new jobs, the highest ever employment-to-population ratio (64.3 percent), and the lowest unemployment rate since 1970 (4.1 percent).

Most relevant to the welfare decline has been the increase in average real earnings, especially among low-wage workers. For example, since the second quarter of 1996, weekly earnings for full-time workers have grown 5.3 percent. The gains for low-income, full-time workers have been even larger: 7.0 percent for those at the 25th percentile of earnings and 8.5 percent for those at the 10th percentile of earnings.

Also helping to reduce caseloads has been the progress in fulfilling Clinton's promise "to make work pay." Both Demo-

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cratic and Republican Congresses have supported (the latter sometimes reluctantly) Clinton's initiatives for massive increases in government aid to the working poor. So much so that this spending now far exceeds what was spent on the old AFDC program. Between 1993 and 1999 alone, total aid to the working poor increased by about $25 billion a year, from about $40 billion to about $65 billion (in 1999 dollars). At its height, combined federal and state spending on AFDC never exceeded $30 billion.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), for example, provides a cash subsidy to low-income, working parents. Between 1993 and 1999, total expenditures on the EITC rose from $18 billion to $30 billion (all in 1999 dollars). The increases for particular groups were striking: For example, the income supplement for a single mother (with two children) working at the minimum wage more than doubled, rising from about $1,700 to about $3,900 per year.

Child-care aid has also expanded, becoming all but an entitlement for those families leaving welfare. Total annual federal and related state child-care expenditures rose from $8 billion to over $12 billion in the same years, providing child-care slots for well over one million additional children. Gaps in coverage remain, and take-up rates may be lower than many advocates say are appropriate (although the latter is probably because so many parents already have access to government subsidized child care or have other family members who can care for their children). In any event, subsidized child care is obviously helping many low-skilled and low-earning mothers work.

Medicaid eligibility, too, has been substantially expanded. While Medicaid was once limited primarily to families receiving welfare, sequential expansions for pregnant women and children (beginning in the mid 1980s) have taken eligibility to between 100 and 250 percent of the poverty line (depending on the child's age and the state program). The welfare-reform law gave states authority to expand coverage for adults, and some have done so. As a result, total Medicaid and related health-care costs for low-income families with children rose from $15 billion in 1993 to $24 billion in 1999—making millions more children (and sometimes families) eligible.

The absence of health-care coverage is not an insuperable

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barrier to work for mothers who are healthy and who have healthy children. But for those mothers who have chronic illnesses, or whose children have them, the threat of losing coverage can be a substantial disincentive to leaving welfare.

Clinton also managed to push through the Republican-controlled Congress a two-stage increase in the minimum wage—from $4.25 an hour to $4.75 an hour on October 1, 1996, and then to its current $5.15 an hour on September 1, 1997. Moreover, additional expansions in aid to the working poor are looming. The child tax credit and Child Health Insurance Program will grow as they are fully phased in. The Clinton administration has proposed further expansions in child care and the EITC, and has taken steps to expand participation of low-income working families in Medicaid and Food Stamps. It also continues to push for increases in the minimum wage.

Explaining the decline

A number of respected researchers have used econometric models to estimate how much of the caseload decline was caused by welfare reform itself compared to the economy and increased aid to the working poor. The models they use, unfortunately, are extremely sensitive to the assumptions and variables incorporated, making their findings imprecise. Nevertheless, most of the studies lead to a similar conclusion: In the early years of the caseload decline (1994–96), around 40 or 50 percent of the decline was due to the economy and the stronger job prospects for low-skilled workers. Later in the economic expansion (1996–99), the same and other studies conclude that the economy accounted for only about 10 or perhaps 20 percent of the decline.

Many studies also attempt to gauge the impact of the increased aid to the working poor. This decade-long effort to "make work pay" may be an even more important factor in the declining rolls, accounting for perhaps 40 to 50 percent of the initial declines and 30 to 40 percent of the later declines.

As for welfare reform itself, these studies usually estimate its impact at from 15 to 20 percent for the early declines and about 30 to 40 percent for later ones. (Most studies also find that the failure to increase welfare benefits, a 20-year trend, reduced rolls another 5 to 10 percent.) Consolidating the esti-

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mated impacts on initial and later declines (and weighting them for the size of each), here is what the studies suggest: *The robust economy explains 15 to 25 percent of the decline; aid to the working poor 30 to 45 percent; increases in the minimum wage 0 to 5 percent; and welfare reform 30 to 45 percent.*

Placing too much confidence in the results of such econometric models is always questionable. These studies have many weaknesses, including the failure to include all policy changes, such as heightened child-support enforcement. Most also fail to consider at least partially independent demographic factors, such as declines in out-of-wedlock births, drug abuse, crime, and immigration. We doubt, for example, that increased aid to the working poor has had as much impact as they suggest; we would attribute more of the decline to the strong economy and to welfare reform generally. Nevertheless, these studies were carefully conducted, and their results are roughly consistent. Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that they correctly reflect the approximate contribution of these four factors to the decline in caseloads.

It is possible that welfare reform has played a more substantial role, interacting with the strong economy and more generous aid to the working poor to encourage more single mothers to try working. By this way of thinking, the strong economy and more generous aid are necessary but not sufficient conditions—with welfare reform providing the needed motivation for people to seek jobs or the support of others who have jobs. After all, we have had strong economies in the past without concomitant welfare declines; sometimes welfare rolls have even risen. In other words, the impact of each of the factors may be greater than would otherwise be the case if they had occurred alone.

The results of randomized welfare experiments, however, seem to confirm econometric estimates of welfare reform's only partial role in reducing caseloads. Starting in earnest in 1992, states were granted waivers from the old AFDC rules, but only if they established rigorous, random-assignment experiments to measure the impact of their new policies. Many of these new policies bear a close resemblance to the program restrictions in new-style state welfare regimes, such as tougher

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work requirements, time-limited benefits, family caps, and linking benefits to immunization and school attendance. The experiments also reflect many of the expansions in benefits that characterize welfare reform, such as liberalized resource limits, transitional benefits, eligibility for two-parent families, and earnings disregards (which allow working recipients to keep more of their benefits). About 10 of these experiments have yielded findings that provide an indirect measure of welfare reform's impact on caseloads.

Across all 10 of these waiver studies, and regardless of the varying combination of program components, the difference between the experimental and control groups is rarely more than a few percentage points. The biggest declines in welfare receipt due to welfare reform do not exceed 15 percent or so, often over two or three years. This does not mean that welfare reform's contribution to the decline is only 15 percent. We recognize that these randomized experiments are an imperfect measure of welfare reform's potential impact because they do not capture either its role in discouraging people from going on the rolls ("entry effects") nor its broader impact on personal and agency behavior (partly through a change in community values). The point is that no rigorously evaluated program of welfare reform has ever had an impact even remotely comparable to what has happened to national welfare caseloads.

Indeed, sometimes the group receiving the "reformed" welfare services was less likely to leave the rolls. This is because most of the waiver experiments, like most state-implemented welfare reforms, include components that both decrease caseloads (like work mandates) and increase them (like the expansion of earnings disregards). Thus Minnesota's "welfare reform," which expanded the state's earnings disregard, asset limits, and two-parent eligibility for benefits while imposing modest work requirements, increased caseloads by almost 5 percent for long-term recipients after 21 months.

Leaving welfare without working

In addition to the often unappreciated contribution of the economy and aid to the working poor, another significant aspect of the caseload decline is that so many mothers seem to be leaving welfare without taking jobs.

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The best source of data about the families that have left welfare are surveys of former welfare recipients ("leaver studies") that have been conducted by various states and by the Urban Institute. Although they all have some weaknesses, such as low response rates and insufficiently detailed information, the best studies tell about the same story: Between 60 to 70 percent of those who left welfare were employed at the time they were surveyed (and 60 to 85 percent had been employed at some point since leaving). Of those who were working, about 60 to 80 percent seem to work full-time, earning about $6 to $8 per hour (or about $800 to $1,000 per month). The remainder worked fewer hours and thus earned less money. (Many studies, however, exclude the 20 to 30 percent of leaver families that returned to welfare, which tends to minimize the difficulty some mothers have finding work.)

Broader measures of employment are consistent with this high level of nonwork among leavers—and also suggest that many of the single mothers who did not go on welfare are also not working. For example, between March 1994 and March 1999, the number of employed single mothers with children under age 18 increased by 1.251 million (from 5.712 million to 6.963 million). During the same period, welfare caseloads (almost all including a single mother) fell by 2.430 million (from 5.098 million to 2.668 million). Even if the entire 1.251 million increase in the number of single mothers working in this period represented those who were previously on welfare (or would have gone on welfare during the period), they would still amount to only about half of the caseload decline.

Some mothers who left welfare, of course, may not be reporting their employment. A four-city study conducted by researchers Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein in the early 1990s found that about 30 percent of low-income working mothers and about 50 percent of welfare mothers had unreported work. But there is no reason why the percentage not reporting work should have grown in recent years. If anything, the expansions in earnings disregards and the EITC should have encouraged more low-income mothers to report their employment.

Thus only about 50 to 60 percent of the mothers who have left welfare (and stayed off) seem to be working regularly. The surprisingly large number of mothers leaving welfare with-

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out then working has been all but ignored by most commentators, including severe critics of welfare reform. Yet this has profound implications for the economic and social condition of low-income families.

Other sources of support

How could so many mothers have left welfare without working? Work requirements and heightened levels of "hassle," by lowering the value of welfare, would be expected to cause mothers to leave welfare for work, even relatively low-paid work. But why would mothers leave welfare without having a job? The burdens placed on them hardly seem sufficient reason for them to abandon their only support for themselves and their children.

The leaver studies suggest the answer: These mothers have other sources of support besides welfare. In South Carolina, for example, nonworking leavers were almost twice as likely as working leavers to have other sources of support—including other forms of government assistance, such as Social Security (13 percent vs. 6 percent) or SSI (20 percent vs. 8 percent); free housing from a parent or relative (15 percent vs. 10 percent); another adult in the home to help with the bills (17 percent vs. 7 percent); and help from someone outside the home (22 percent vs. 8 percent). A study of former recipients in Milwaukee, conducted by the Hudson Institute and Mathematica Policy Research, found that over two-thirds of all the mothers who left welfare received help (e.g., transportation assistance, a place to stay, and food) from family or friends. Those leavers who were not working were about 15 percent more likely to be receiving such help (72 percent vs. 63 percent).

Most leaver studies do not identify the sources of support for working and nonworking mothers separately, but they do reinforce the importance of other household members or income sources. In Iowa, after families were dropped from welfare, they were about 33 percent more likely to be relying on others for a place to stay (25 percent vs. 33 percent). Similarly, in Florida, where families have begun to lose welfare due to a time limit, one-third of those who hit the time limit either moved or had a different living arrangement, such as adding another household member to help with the expenses.

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Finally, in Connecticut, 43 percent of the families that left welfare due to the state's 21-month time limit reported living with at least one other adult six months after benefit termination. (There is no comparison data for the period before the time limit was reached.)

When welfare reform was being debated, many experts predicted increases in such "coresidency" or doubling up arrangements as mothers were pushed off welfare. So far, however, there is little evidence of substantial increases in coresidency (or marriage, for that matter). According to Christopher Jencks, for example, the total number of single mothers residing with another adult has remained essentially stable since 1988, with no discernible change after welfare reform. It is possible that many mothers entered such living arrangements while their total number remained constant—with as many mothers having left such arrangements because of the improving economy as entered them because they were pushed off welfare. But without more data, it is impossible to know for sure.

There is another way that mothers can leave welfare without working: They can fall back on *preexisting* coresidency arrangements (together with other sources of support). Based on a study by Rebecca London, which used data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, we calculate that, in 1990, before the declines in welfare caseloads, at least 37 percent of welfare mothers lived with other adults—18 percent with their parents, 6 percent with a boyfriend, and 13 percent with others.

These findings may seem surprising, but for many years now the welfare system has largely ignored the household income in such coresidency arrangements. Depending on the situation, the income of the grandparents, with whom the adult welfare mother was living, would not be considered (for example, if the mother was an adult herself); and the man-in-the-house rule (which denied benefits to households with a cohabiting male) was abandoned years ago. We would suggest that when faced with the new work and behavioral requirements, mothers who had other sources of support sufficient to permit them to forgo welfare (predominantly those living in households with adequate economic resources) simply left welfare without looking for work.

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It also helps that many of these mothers are still receiving other government benefits—primarily Food Stamps and housing—which are often much more valuable than the basic welfare payment. (The continued availability of Medicaid also encourages mothers to leave welfare without finding work, even if the family does not sign up for coverage until someone takes ill.) Nonworking mothers on their own could not subsist on only these benefits, but nonworking mothers living with others (or getting support from others) could get by.

This is in particular the case in low-benefit states where it may simply no longer "pay" to be on welfare as opposed, say, to Food Stamps. In Alabama, for example, in 1999, the welfare benefit for a family of three was just $164 per month, compared to a food-stamp allotment of $329. (Moreover, the food-stamp benefit comes with virtually no strings attached, whereas cash assistance can be accompanied by work and other behavioral requirements that reduce its value still further.) So mothers in low-benefit states can leave welfare and not suffer anything like a complete loss of income, especially if there are other adults in the household that have income.

This makes economic sense. If one assumes that these mothers value their time at the minimum wage or above, then there is little incentive for them to engage in work activities for 20 to 30 hours per week to avoid a sanction that can be as little as $10 to $50 per week. The added income from complying with these requirements translates into an effective wage of fifty cents to two dollars per hour. This does not compensate for the lost free time (what economists call "leisure") that mothers can use, for example, to care for their children or take a job with unreported income. Data on this behavior are difficult to obtain, but its possible magnitude is suggested by the following: Between 1994 and 1998, the number of single-parent families on Food Stamps that were both not on welfare and with no earnings grew by 10 percent, or 55,000 families. While this is an imperfect measure, it could easily understate the phenomenon.

The economy and aid to the working poor could also play a role here, as more households would *become* economically comfortable enough for the mother to leave welfare without working. This would be consistent with earlier patterns. Greg

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Duncan of Northwestern University and his colleagues used data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to determine why mothers left welfare between 1986 and 1991. (Leaving welfare was defined as receiving welfare in one year but not the next year.) They found that about one-half of welfare exits were for work (or a rise in earnings), about a quarter for changes in marital status or living arrangements, about 5 percent because there were no children under 18, and the remainder were due to a variety of reasons such as an increase in other transfer income or a change in state of residence. About one-third of the earnings-related exits involved an increase in the earnings of an adult *already* in the household other than the mother, demonstrating the importance of shared living arrangements.

These dynamics also explain the behavior of those mothers Larry Mead of New York University calls the "happily sanctioned." Such mothers accept less in welfare benefits rather than work or meet other behavioral requirements. In about 14 states, which include about half the national welfare caseload, the sanction for noncompliance is only a partial reduction in benefits—that is, the family's grant is reduced by some percent, usually representing the mother's share of the grant (about one-third of the welfare check). These mothers may not actually be happy, but since this reduction typically amounts to only one-sixth of the mothers' total package of benefits, one can see why they willingly make the trade-off.

Assessing "welfare reform"

When congressional Republicans were pushing for the enactment of their welfare-reform bill, opponents predicted widespread hardship—including sharply increased homelessness. Happily, there is no evidence that welfare reform has caused substantial increases in homelessness or other indicators of extreme hardship, such as foster-care placements or substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect. And despite extensive efforts, journalists have found few individual horror stories of the harmful effects of welfare reform. As one administrator said, "We underestimated their ability to get jobs that meet their basic needs—or to get support from other sources."

For a while, it appeared that incomes of the poorest single

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mothers might be edging down—a sign that welfare reform might be squeezing those at the bottom. A widely disseminated study by Wendell Primus of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that, from 1995 to 1997, the bottom quintile had experienced an 8 percent drop in income. Even though many of these mothers were not welfare leavers (nor likely to have gone on assistance before welfare reform), advocates latched onto this income decline as a sign that welfare reform should be reconsidered. However, Primus's further analysis after another year of data has reduced the estimated income loss for this group to about 4 percent. In the same period, 1995 to 1998, all the other quintiles of income for single mothers rose, with the middle quintile up 7 percent, going from $20,617 to $22,063.

But if welfare reform has not been the social catastrophe some predicted, neither has it lifted large numbers of female-headed families out of poverty. Thanks to the EITC and other aid, most of the mothers who left welfare and are working now have more income than when they were on welfare. But average earnings are only about $12,000 a year. And as we saw, many mothers simply left welfare—without working. Unless they lived with someone or moved in with someone earning a great deal more, they probably suffered at least a partial loss of income.

Moreover, some of those who gained income through work may not be immediately better off. They also have more expenses. Even if their child-care costs are fully covered, they still face other work-related expenses, such as transportation and clothing. And by working, they lose the ability to earn additional money off the books. Thus their higher income comes at the price of having to work many hours a week while also raising their children, often on their own.

There are many weaknesses in the data that underlie the foregoing conclusions. For example, it is very difficult to find and count the number of homeless families and individuals, much less get detailed information on their characteristics. Data on substantiated cases of child maltreatment are a function of the number of reports received, the ability of the system to investigate them, and the willingness of states to report them. Even the much-cited income data used to mea-

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sure trends in financial well-being are plagued by numerous problems. Perhaps most significantly, reported welfare receipt in the Current Population Survey (CPS) is over one-third lower than indicated by administrative records, a problem that has been worsening in recent years. These surveys also miss much of the income that is earned working "off-the-books" or received from boyfriends or other household members. For example, recipients may want to conceal this income from those administering the survey, for fear that it could affect their eligibility for welfare.

This mixed picture of life after welfare is captured in the "before and after" questions asked in six of the more reliable leaver studies (Mississippi, New Mexico, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin). Depending on the study, between 20 to 40 percent of those responding said that "life was better" while on welfare. Conversely, 60 to 80 percent of former recipients think that life is the same or better being off welfare. (Three states asked separately about being better off. In all three, about 55 percent said they were "better off"; about 25 percent said they were doing the "same"; and about 20 percent said they were "worse off.")

What should we make of these patterns? First, reducing welfare rolls is a tremendous and unprecedented achievement—especially given the apparently small amount of additional hardship. If this result had been guaranteed when welfare reform was being debated in 1996, most opposition would surely have melted away. Indeed, even some past opponents of welfare reform have been quieted by its apparent early success. Nevertheless, welfare reform should not be given credit for the consequences of a stupendous economy and unprecedented increases in aid to the working poor. More of the mothers who gained ground after leaving welfare can probably thank the latter two factors for their improved situation, and more of those who lost ground probably left assistance because of welfare reform and the added hassle associated with it.

What about those mothers who are now working but not making much more than their previous welfare benefits, or those who are now relying on the support of others rather than welfare? Robert Haveman, an economics professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says that they are "treading

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water, but staying afloat." We hope they are not just treading water, but building their skills or living in households where the prime earner is doing so.

For most Americans, welfare reform was not just about reducing the rolls, nor was it some silver bullet that would immediately eradicate poverty. Instead, it was about reducing the deep-seated social and personal dysfunction associated with long-term dependency, thereby ultimately reducing poverty. For welfare reform to be a success on this measure will depend on whether the low-paying jobs taken by many leavers lead to better jobs, whether the household arrangements (and other sources of support) that have allowed mothers to leave welfare without working prove supportive and nurturing, and whether the eventual result is less dysfunctional behavior among parents and better outcomes for children. We may need a generation to find out.

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The lessons of W-2

AMY L. SHERMAN

LIKE pious Muslims making the pilgrimage to Mecca, policy wonks have been flocking to Milwaukee to study its ambitious experiment in welfare reform. The reason why isn't hard to figure out. Since 1987, Wisconsin's welfare rolls have plummeted a stunning 88 percent; in Milwaukee, the state's largest city, the welfare caseload has fallen 75 percent, far bigger than the average drop of other large cities. "Wisconsin Works," or W-2, is the pinnacle of Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson's reform efforts. Launched in 1997, W-2 has won praise from conservatives for its hard-nosed "work-first" principles and from liberals for its generous benefits. W-2's ultimate success, though, will depend on what happens in Milwaukee, since over 80 percent of Wisconsin's remaining welfare caseload—made up of the hardest cases—resides in that city. Milwaukee's experience will demonstrate whether W-2 can serve as a model for all cities or works only for the easier-to-employ.

Critics of welfare reform gloomily predicted that W-2 would

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devastate Milwaukee's inner city, but so far it hasn't. In fact, in conversations with about 50 individuals in three low-income Milwaukee neighborhoods (Parklawn, Keefe Avenue, and the Hispanic south side), I found that many poor families are faring better. Even more important, W-2 promises to have beneficial long-term effects on families, community life, and the culture as a whole. Yet while the news from Milwaukee is heartening, frontline poverty workers are identifying key points where the system isn't living up to its promise. If W-2 supporters dismiss these constructive criticisms as the tired laments of antireform liberals, they'll miss a crucial opportunity to improve the program and preserve it from the backlash that just a few, easily avoidable, horror stories of welfare-reform failure will surely provoke.

A successful program

The roots of W-2 go back to 1987, when the state began, through a series of incremental reforms, to strengthen work requirements as a condition of receiving public assistance. Precursors to W-2 instituted the "diversion" principle—insisting that an applicant for welfare complete a thorough job search while her application for aid is under review. Wisconsin's 1996 "Pay for Performance" initiative established financial incentives for counties (which oversaw welfare provision) to boost job placements among welfare recipients.

W-2 built on both ideas—diversion and incentives—but it went much further. It opened up the very administration of welfare to competition, shattering the counties' monopoly on the delivery of services. In Milwaukee, five agencies—the for-profits Maximus and YW-Works and the nonprofits UMOS, OIC, and Employment Solutions—soon won state contracts worth, in total, $357 million to serve various areas of the city. The drop in the caseload and the cost savings from privatization (the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute estimates that Wisconsin saved $10.25 million in W-2's first 28 months) have enabled the state to spend 45 percent more per family while keeping W-2's aggregate costs below what they would have been under the old system.

The idea of work is central to the new system. Almost no one, including the disabled, the drug-addicted, and mothers of

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young children, is exempt from working. Under W-2, a needy individual visits the job center assigned to her locality. A "Resource Specialist" assesses whether she can be diverted from aid (i.e., simply given job tips or a referral to a private helping organization) or should meet with a Financial and Employment Planner (FEP)—W-2's version of the old caseworker. The FEP judges which of W-2's four "tiers" provides the most appropriate level of assistance. Thus far, approximately one-third of the caseload has needed only modest, "first tier" aid (e.g., transportation or daycare benefits). But as agencies reach down to help the remaining welfare caseload—made up of the hardest cases—the percentage of applicants assigned to tiers offering intensive support (such as a "work experience" placement or drug rehabilitation) is growing.

From the start, critics have relentlessly criticized W-2. The biggest fear has been that not enough jobs would be available for those individuals W-2 pushed into the labor market. But using pilot study data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, economist John C. Weicher estimates that in May 1996, there were probably 35,000 job openings with 30,000 people looking for work in Milwaukee. Today, the city's unemployment is a mere 3.1 percent.

W-2 participants seem to be taking advantage of these abundant opportunities. The state's 1998 study of individuals leaving the welfare rolls showed that a full 83 percent had worked at least at some time since leaving, and that 62 percent were working at the time of their interview (most of them full time). Those not working were not bereft of support: More than half received Food Stamps or unemployment compensation; nearly 20 percent lived with a working spouse or friend; and more than 80 percent received Medicaid benefits.

There's strong corroborating evidence for these findings. At the Hillside public-housing project in Milwaukee's blighted central-city area, the number of households with at least one full-time income jumped from 17 percent in January 1996 to 55 percent in January 1998. Data from other low-income city neighborhoods indicate a huge rise in the aggregate amount of money returned to residents through the Earned Income Tax Credit, available only to the working poor (up 176 percent in Parklawn and 148 percent in the south side district). Since

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W-2, temporary employment agencies and tax-preparation firms have been springing up across Milwaukee, signaling more people in the work force. And faith-based groups running used-clothing centers report more individuals requesting "career clothes." Though these striking indicators don't *prove* that W-2 has more poor people working, they certainly fit that hypothesis.

Even if former welfare recipients are working, critics say, W-2 is deepening poverty and hunger. But data from food pantries are ambiguous. The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee's 1998 study suggested heightened food insecurity among the needy and told harrowing stories of poor people digging through dumpsters or selling their blood plasma for money to buy food. But Barbara Caravella of the Salvation Army's emergency services reports that half of the city's food pantries have seen an increase in requests for assistance while the other half have seen a decrease. And Mike Rintelman of the Milwaukee Outreach Center, a nonprofit serving low-income and homeless families, thinks claims of increased hunger are ludicrous: "The food pantries have surpluses," he reports.

Critics have also worried that W-2 would throw helpless people into the streets, but information on evictions and homelessness is inconclusive. Calls to the Salvation Army for rent assistance are "definitely up," Caravella reports. But William Martin, CEO of Employment Solutions, notes that evictions in Milwaukee County have been steadily rising for the last eight years, long before W-2 or Pay for Performance. Maria Rodriguez from the Milwaukee Housing Authority reports that there has been no rise in public-housing evictions since W-2 kicked in.

Creating workers

Of course, even if W-2 participants are moving into the labor force, and poverty and homelessness are not getting worse, we still need to know how former welfare recipients are actually faring. Is W-2 improving their lives?

One of the positive "leaver" stories belongs to Alida Rodriguez, a conscientious 26-year-old single mother with two young sons. During her first year at the Latino Health Organization, Inc., she has already received two promotions. At a full-time annual salary of over $18,000, Rodriguez says she's

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much better off now than when she was on welfare. She has been able to afford a 1979 Oldsmobile that has slashed her morning commute from two hours to 30 minutes, Nintendo for her kids, and a used washer and dryer. "I'm able to pay my bills on time," she says, "even though I don't get Food Stamps anymore and my co-pay for childcare has increased." That Rodriguez still lives in subsidized housing in Hillside helps her financial situation, to be sure, but she's well on her way to complete independence. And Rodriguez is hardly the only Hillside tenant doing better. Ricardo Diaz from the Milwaukee Housing Authority notes that the average income of Hillside residents has risen more than 30 percent from January 1996 to January 1998.

Michelle Crawford, an African-American single mother, became W-2's best-known success when Governor Thompson invited her to address the state legislature during his 1999 "state of the state" address. On welfare for 10 years before W-2, Crawford admitted that when she heard about the new program, she was scared—she had gotten used to a life of passive dependency on the state. Thanks to W-2, she wound up in a Community Service job at the Engineered Plastics factory in Menomonee Falls. She was bored at first, but stuck with it and even volunteered to complete additional assignments when other Community Service job participants employed at the plant didn't show. The company rewarded her diligence with additional training, and Crawford now is a machine operator making over $11 an hour.

Nonetheless, things aren't easy for leavers. In late 1997, authors Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein published *Making Ends Meet* based on interviews with welfare-reliant and working-poor single mothers in five cities. They calculate that poor single parents can "make it" if they earn something over $8 an hour—about $16,000 a year. Many W-2 participants with full-time jobs come close. Eight I interviewed, who worked in full-time, unsubsidized jobs, had an average wage of $7.97 an hour. Maximus' clients average $7.46 an hour. Community Enterprises of Greater Milwaukee, which offers computer training to W-2 participants, reports that its graduates typically start at $8.00 an hour.

Citing a survey by the Wisconsin Catholic Bishops in which

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leavers say they still "worry a lot" about paying bills, reform critics complain that W-2 has merely turned the welfare poor into the working poor. But surely it is unrealistic to think W-2—or any other reform program—could move participants miraculously from the poorest to the middle class. The journey almost certainly includes a stopover in the ranks of the working poor. More to the point, the working poor are better off than the welfare poor, both materially and in terms of possible advancement. Indeed, according to Milwaukee's Center for Self-Sufficiency, a Wisconsin parent with two children who works full time at $8 an hour will—once Food Stamps and the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit get tacked on—gross $19,647 annually. That's nearly $6,000 above the federal poverty level of $13,650 for a family of three. Critics should also note that Americans are more likely to consider the working poor as deserving assistance from private charities and taxpayer-funded programs.

W-2's positive impact on participants goes well beyond economics. Almost all the W-2 participants I spoke with said that work had boosted their sense of self-worth and their hope for the future. W-2 has also sparked the development within some low-income families of a more structured life style through the rigors of the workaday world. According to Anthony Taylor of the Westside Housing Cooperative, "Before, there were lots of people walking the streets at 11 or 12. Now you see a thrust of people between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. and again between 3:30 and 6 p.m." Seeing mom go to work also has a positive effect on children, according to school social workers like Barbara Haag. "Kids don't like to admit that their family is on welfare. They feel proud of their working moms." Plus, Anthony Taylor maintains, kids seem better behaved—there's less nuisance and truancy, at least at Westside.

W-2's work requirements also undercut the notorious "crayfish syndrome" that plagued highly motivated welfare recipients under the old AFDC system. Folk wisdom has it that if you put a bunch of crayfish in a bucket and one starts to climb out, the others will pull it down. A similar phenomenon sometimes confronted welfare recipients who sought to improve themselves. When public-housing resident and welfare recipient Clarissa Crews set out to get her GED in the early

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1990s, her neighbors harassed her. "Who do you think you are? You think you're better than us?" Crews recalls their words with a grimace. Now, with W-2 essentially requiring all welfare recipients to better themselves, "strivers" won't find themselves singled out for ridicule.

Fighting the bureaucracy

Not surprisingly, given the scope of W-2, the successes have been accompanied by some hardship. School officials complain that W-2 is taking a toll on children whose families bounce from one insecure housing arrangement to another. School social worker Maxine Winston of Keefe Avenue Elementary says she has seen "three or maybe four families living together in one house," and adds, "We're also watching fourth and fifth graders missing school to baby-sit sick younger siblings at home when mom can't find daycare and has to go to work."

That these troubling things are happening is indisputable. But the simultaneous existence of such suffering and of the new W-2 system does not automatically mean W-2 caused these hardships. Simplistic analysis won't help the people who need help, or fix the parts of the system that need improvement. We need a clearer understanding of who is suffering and why. Judging by interviews with those who are struggling, there are multiple reasons for hardship.

In some cases, the suffering results from the individual's failure to meet W-2's expectations. "Elizabeth," a middle-aged resident at the Salvation Army shelter (known locally as the Lodge), admits that she ended up homeless not from W-2 but from "getting back onto drugs" and subsequently failing to fulfill the program's work rules.

Other individuals gave up on W-2 too quickly. They had one negative interaction with agency staff, got disgusted, abandoned W-2, and attempted to find a job on their own. For some, the end result was tolerable; others experienced disaster. Pauline Nash bitterly remembers her short-lived experience on W-2. Her family hit a crisis in 1998 when her unemployment ran out and her husband was temporarily unable to work. "I didn't know how I was going to pay my rent, my lights, my gas. My kids didn't have anything to eat," Nash

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recalls. "So I went down there [to the W-2 agency] to get help and they made me feel so bad. They told me I'd have to work 55 hours before I could get a check or emergency Food Stamps. It was crazy!" This should not have been Nash's experience—emergency Food Stamps are available immediately when appropriate—but it may have arisen because the system's emphasis on diversion discourages staff from offering instant help. Nash abandoned W-2 and successfully petitioned Cordelia Taylor for a job at the nursing homes Taylor runs in the Keefe Avenue neighborhood.

Some of Nash's friends who tried to make it on their own didn't fare as well. She knows three who gave up on W-2—"too much red tape"—and sought help from temporary agencies. Six months later, one was working at Kentucky Fried Chicken, one at Family Dollar, one as a security guard in the mall—all making minimum wage. The woman at KFC, who has four kids, fell behind on her rent, got evicted, and had to move in with the Nashes for a few weeks.

Breakdown in communication between agency workers and recipients is another source of unnecessary hardships. Former AFDC recipient Judie Eschrich has flourished in her job at Amerivoice, a small telephone service company, having worked her way up in nearly two years to become the CEO's "right-hand woman." But she failed to report her new job at Amerivoice to the county agency overseeing her rent assistance. Says Eschrich: "I thought it was intertwined with W-2 and they'd know I was working." The result: She had to pay back $1,500 in rent-assistance overpayments, seriously crunching her budget.

Still other W-2 participants suffer because of shortcomings by agency and county employees. Ruby Rodriguez had been staying with her kids at the Salvation Army Lodge for 20 days when I met her in late April 1999. An articulate Latino woman, Rodriguez spent an hour describing the runaround she was getting at her assigned W-2 agency. "I'll go down there, wait for two or three hours, and finally talk to a guy. He'll give me some job listings and tell me I have 72 hours to find a job. When I get one I should let them know, and then the childcare will be provided," she explains. "But after I get a job, I'll get a letter saying my daycare has been denied. So then I can't

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find anyone to watch my two youngest ones, and so I'm jumping from job to job. And I'd go back to the W-2 agency and ask, 'Why am I being denied?' And they'll say, 'Ms. Rodriguez, you're not participating correctly.' But I tell them, 'I am participating, I'm trying to cooperate.'"

Rodriguez's two main complaints—an incompetent and inattentive FEP and mix-ups with her daycare benefits—have some legitimacy. From her multiple interactions with agency staff, Barbara Vanderburgh of the Joy House shelter for homeless women says simply, "Some FEPs are fantastic; others, jerky." W-2 agency staff admit that in the early days FEPs were handling caseloads of 120 to 130 clients—well above the original 55-client-per-caseworker guideline suggested by W-2's designers. With such big caseloads, some W-2 participants were bound to get short shrift.

The daycare snafus Rodriguez related weren't the fabrication of a disgruntled welfare recipient. They were embarrassingly frequent in W-2's early days. Richard Buschmann, Director of Childcare for Milwaukee County Department of Human Services, admitted in October 1998 that "glitches" had arisen in as many as 60 percent of the daycare cases in W-2's first six months. Clients eligible for help were wrongly denied benefits, and childcare providers often did not receive timely payment from the county.

To handle complaints, W-2 does have a formal grievance process in place. Statistics from grievance cases indicate both good and bad news. As agencies have gained experience in administering W-2, the number of formal "fact-finding" procedures demanded by upset clients has decreased. However, slightly more often than not in grievance cases that get to the hearing stage, the client's complaint is determined legitimate and the agency found negligent.

Compassionate conservatism

For W-2 to become the nation's most successful reform initiative in lifting the needy out of poverty, administrators will not only need to get errant caseworkers in line or fine-tune the eligibility and sanctions processes so that needy individuals are neither wrongly denied help nor penalized unfairly. They will also need to avoid such a blind devotion to

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the system's message of personal responsibility that it prevents them from acting realistically toward the remaining, hardest-to-serve people.

W-2 works for clients who pay attention to details, stay organized, and are diligent, patient, thick-skinned, and able to cope with the workaday world. But not all clients currently possess these strengths; indeed, fewer and fewer in the bottom tier of the welfare caseload do. Many cannot deal effectively with the bureaucracy. They may be illiterate, have a poor command of English, or be unable to organize themselves and their paperwork. Under AFDC, welfare recipients could be passive: They attended a couple of meetings, answered a few questions, filled out some forms—and month after month, their aid check appeared. W-2 demands that they be active participants in shaping their own road to self-sufficiency. They must attend more meetings, complete a minimum amount of job-search activities, and actively inquire into the wide range of services available to them. There's nothing inherently wrong with all this. But without a lot of handholding, the nonchalant, the timid, the slow-to-understand, and the touchy and impatient will not succeed in this system. So, W-2 administrators can choose. They can legitimize handholding, and risk being called spineless by purists who see this as countering the personal-responsibility message of W-2. Or they can permit many poor people to fail, and thus risk being called heartless by the Left.

In making their choice, policy makers would do well to heed the advice of frontline pro-reform poverty workers like Deborah Darden. She is the Executive Director of "Right Alternatives," the program Marvin Olasky, a strong national advocate for work-based welfare reform, has commended. Darden got herself off welfare by eschewing the entitlement mentality, accepting personal responsibility for her circumstances, working hard, and relying on God. Then she began helping others in the Parklawn project to do the same. For nearly 10 years she has run support groups emphasizing personal responsibility and traditional values, and she has established a neighborhood center to provide training and daycare. Darden's complaints about W-2, in short, do not come from a welfare defender.

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Darden says the country needed welfare reform and work requirements. Nevertheless, she emphasizes, "there is so much in the details of the suffering of the people that is not being [publicized]. I've known people—good workers, not the kind who had to be pried out of their seats—who've got caught up somehow and have been evicted, homeless!" Darden would like to see welfare reform's time limits extended for individuals with legitimate hardships and thinks the W-2 agencies need to do more outreach and home visits, patiently explaining the system's procedures to clients who feel overwhelmed and confused by the changes.

Darden also stresses that the agencies need to crack down on businesses that are taking advantage of W-2 workers. Too often, she asserts, once the W-2 participant is placed in a job, caseworkers fail to monitor her circumstances, leaving her unprotected against businesses that "jerk her around." For example, she relates stories of W-2 participants who, at the encouragement of their W-2 agency, have accepted private-sector jobs in suburban companies, with disastrous consequences. The firms have abruptly shifted the women's work schedules—wreaking havoc on their carefully designed daycare and transportation plans. They have promised the women full-time hours but delivered only part-time hours, creating financial crises. Or company staff have failed to submit crucial reports back to the W-2 agencies concerning the work records of W-2 employees—resulting in unfair sanctions.

Darden's belief in the need for handholding is shared by Cordelia Taylor of Family House. "A lot of these [W-2 participants] have never seen anybody who worked before," Taylor says. "They don't understand how to get themselves ready for work or why it's important to be on time." Taylor wishes more welfare-reform supporters would embrace the necessity—and legitimacy—of mentoring and one-on-one support. "People say to me, 'But you're holding people's hands, and they have to learn to make it on their own.' That's true. But [handholding] has to be done if we're going to make a success out of this W-2."

If the experiences of the W-2 "success stories" I interviewed are illustrative, they support the contentions of Darden and Taylor. In every instance, these W-2 participants credited their success to the personal, caring support they received

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from someone who helped them walk the road from welfare to work. For some, the extra help came from family; for others, it was an agency staff member or church pastor who went the extra mile. Lewanna Alexander, a W-2 participant flourishing in her Community Service Job at Vieau Elementary School, says she would still be a drug addict if it weren't for the storefront church that rescued her, housed her for months, and helped her navigate the W-2 process. For still others, it was the employer who made the difference. Alida Rodriguez and other W-2 participants working at the Latino Health Organization expressed fervent gratitude for its Executive Director, Maria Gamaz. Gamaz takes the praise in stride; she doesn't see the extra handholding she does—such as interceding with the W-2 agencies—as charity but as good business. "I place a call. I get it resolved—and here's a happy, smiling, productive employee," Gamaz says.

Realism and grace

Judging by the enhanced supports W-2 agencies have erected in recent months for clients in the remaining 20 percent of the caseload, it appears that they are heeding the advice of friendly critics like Darden and Taylor. Maximus has instituted a wake-up program to call clients during the first few weeks of their new job to help ensure they get to work on time. YW-Works bought its own factory so that it could run its own on-the-job training center for unskilled W-2 participants. All of the agencies are exploring partnerships with faith-based groups specializing in drug rehabilitation, soft-skills training, and mentoring. Neighborhood associations and homeless shelters report with satisfaction that they're seeing an increase in W-2 agencies sending outreach workers to meet with low-income families on-site. These attempts to go the extra mile in reaching the most disadvantaged and dysfunctional low-income families are critical to W-2's success in Milwaukee—and any other city where it is tried.

W-2's strong work-first message is laudable. Its assumption that the needy themselves, and not government, are primarily responsible for their own well-being is indisputable. The system's expectations do not need major adjustment. Pragmatism and grace, though, are necessary to its success in Wis-

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consin or anywhere else. An emphasis on diversion is appropriate when the issue is helping a client to avoid a potentially unhealthy dependency on an income-support program. But those programs are inherently different from "work-support" initiatives—like wake-up calls, job clubs, or classes on handling stress—that seek to ensure that the newly working retain their jobs. If these work-support efforts are disdainfully viewed as coddling able-bodied adults who "just need to get it together," many clients will fail unnecessarily. A little more patience and realism, by contrast, could be the key to success. As Cordelia Taylor sums up: "We're going to have to start to meet people where they *are*, not where we assume they *should* be."

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Culture and achievement

NATHAN GLAZER

THE relationship between their cultures and the economic and political trajectories of nations and civilizations is now a major topic among analysts of the differences among nations. The context has been set by such provocative theses on the causes of international conflict and the wealth of nations as those of Samuel Huntington, David Landes, Lawrence Harrison, and Francis Fukuyama, and by the extended debate on Asian values, in which many have participated. The issue of cultural differences also comes up when we try to explain the different fates of ethnic and racial groups in the United States. In the larger, global discussion, we deal with categories rather grander than American ethnic groups, which for the most part begin their lives in America as fragments of much larger societies, nations, and civilizations, and are soon enveloped through processes of acculturа-

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tion and assimilation into the larger American society. In time, for most of these groups, the boundaries that once defined them fade through intermarriage, conversion, and changing identities. It becomes doubtful just what if any elements of cultural distinctiveness they retain, and they become part of a larger American society and civilization.

In the larger discussion, we deal with world religions, world philosophies, world cultures of continental scale, as well as with nations and societies. We consider the causes of international conflict, of national wealth and poverty. In the smaller discussion, we deal with less grand issues, such as the relative educational and economic success of various ethnic groups. In most cases, their histories cannot easily be followed beyond two or three generations in America.

One may ask, what do the successes or failures of American ethnic and racial groups have to do with such large categories as world civilizations, world religions, and world cultures? What is the link between the large discussion and the small one? Whatever may explain the fate of nations and continents, is it possible anything similar among the categories of explanation can help us understand the fate of American ethnic groups?

What is the connection, to take an example, between a common fact that can be observed among American ethnic groups, such as their concentration in certain economic niches, and the larger civilizations from which they have come as immigrants? In New York City, we may observe that the newsstand business is the province of Asian Indians, and in California that the doughnut shop has been colonized by Cambodians. Is there any connection between that Indian occupational concentration in New York and Hindu civilization? (We could refer to other occupational concentrations of Indians, such as in medicine and science, which might make the question less ridiculous.) Is there any connection between Khmer civilization and the Cambodian concentration in doughnut shops? Whatever we have in mind when we think of Khmer civilization—whether Angkor or the very different conditions of today—clearly that is, at initial glance, a farfetched notion.

The shift in scale from Hindu civilization—with its three-thousand-year history, the billion people presently shaped in some respect by it, and its influence over great stretches of

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Asia—to the characteristics, economic, social, political, of a million Indian immigrants in the United States is mind-wrenching. It leads us to realize that whatever we mean by culture or civilization in the large, we will have to have rather different things in mind when we consider its role in the fate of India and its role in the economic progress of American Asian Indians. My discussion is shaped by the contrast between these two scales, and tries to examine more closely what we might mean when we use the category "culture" as an explanation.

The politics of culture

Some preliminary remarks on the shifting status of culture as an explanation over the last century: We all realize that before we resort to culture today to explain the differences in economic progress or political attitudes among nations and ethnic groups, we prefer to find other explanations. Culture is one of the less favored explanatory categories in current thinking. The least favored, of course, is race, which played such a large role over much of the first half of the century, with such evil consequences, and which still occasionally makes an appearance. We prefer not to refer to, or make use of, it today; yet there does seem to be a link between race and culture, perhaps only accidental. The great races on the whole are marked by different cultures, and this connection between culture and race is one reason for our discomfort with cultural explanations.

There was a time when culture seemed a much more benign form of explanation of difference than race. Consider Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, a highly respected work of the 1930s, read widely in American college classes in the 1950s and 1960s because it explained group difference in nongenetic, nonracial terms. Racial explanations have always been conservative or worse than conservative. They don't seem to allow for change. Progressive anthropologists resisted and attacked race as a category in social explanation. Cultural explanations, in contrast, seemed liberal and optimistic. One could not change one's race, but one could change one's culture.

The status of culture as an explanatory variable is no longer considered so benign. First, as I pointed out, there is the

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inevitable link, not in logic but in fact, between race and culture. Second, it seems invidious to use culture to explain why a group or nation has not prospered. Since we all accept economic advancement as desirable, there must be something undesirable about a culture that hampers economic advance. It is true that some trends in contemporary thinking—for example, those critical of the environmental consequences of economic development, or of the cultural effects of globalization—may today look with favor on cultures that hobble economic advance, but for the most part thinking runs the other way. Geographic interpretations are, I think, becoming more popular: They might, for example, explain the backwardness of Africa without having to resort to race or culture. The few good natural harbors on its coastline limited trade and interchange, as compared to Greece or Europe.

On the Left, explanations based on differences in power and degree of exploitation are favored to explain differences among nations and continents, as well as differences among American ethnic and racial groups. Among radicals, and liberals too, explanations from culture are looked at suspiciously. They seem to "blame the victim." We find that preferences in explanations are affected by politics both on the grand scale, where the fate of colonized nations and continents is explained by exploitation by Europe, and on the small scale, in the discussion of American ethnic groups, where explanations from prejudice and discrimination are much more favored than cultural explanations.

Cultural explanations have thus lost the liberal and progressive aura they possessed in the days of Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead. Then race was unchangeable, culture was not. Today, we find culture almost as resistant to change as race. If we resort to world religions and civilizations whose origins we have to trace back two or three millennia to explain the nature of distinctive cultures, what hope do we have of really changing their basic characteristics? And on the smaller scale of American ethnic groups, if we resort to cultural explanations, what hope do we have for the progress of the backward groups?

Culture seems to us these days almost as resistant to change as race. The progressive anthropologists saw culture as change-

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able. But today, we are inhibited in thinking of culture this way. One reason is that we are wary of intervening in a culture to change its characteristics, assuming we knew how. At a time when we think of all cultures as worthy of equal respect, what justification would we have to intervene, whether that intervention is public or private, to change a cultural feature that we think limits economic development? What is our mandate for intervention? But in addition, we are really not very sure about how to intervene to change culture, or what aspects of the culture of a group need changing. Culture is such a spongy concept covering so much—the original anthropological definition covered literally everything that distinguished a group, aside from its genetic inheritance—that we would be at a loss to know what in culture holds up economic progress. Is it family, religion, attitudes toward work, toward education? And under each of these categories, we can find sub-categories that some think important in connecting to success.

For these reasons, the progressive aura attached to cultural explanations has quite evaporated. This does not mean that social scientists should not use culture for understanding. But they should know they are engaged in a dangerous enterprise. To resort to culture as an explanatory variable raises political problems almost as serious as the resort to race. But before we get to those, the question has to be considered, how can we use culture as an explanatory variable?

Big and little traditions

In shifting from the grand scale of continents, world religions, and nations, to American ethnic groups, two major modulations seem to me necessary. When we have gone through them, we may be left with very little to explain by way of culture, if we conceive of it as culture in the large.

The first modulation: Ethnic and racial groups in the United States are not randomly drawn from the large populations that bear or are characterized by a culture. The million Chinese in the United States do not represent a China a thousand times larger, and similarly with the million Asian Indians in the United States. This is the case with every ethnic or racial group, even when their descendants in the United States may outnumber the inhabitants of the nation from which they came,

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as is true for the Irish, and perhaps for some other groups. The visitor to Ireland who knows the Irish of Boston is struck immediately by some surprising differences. Is this owing to the regions or classes of Ireland from which American immigrants were drawn, or to the effects of American civilization or culture affecting Irish immigrants and their descendants?

Immigrants come from distinctive areas, classes, and sub-groups in each society, often from areas and sub-groups with a tradition of emigration. Emigration then sustains itself from these social sub-groups or geographical areas through family connection and a chain of useful knowledge communicated from relatives and friends in the country of immigration to the potential emigrants. The immigrants who form an ethnic community in an immigrant nation sometimes come from surprisingly small areas of the country whose name identifies them. This seems to be true, for example, for the Bangladeshis in Britain. Immigrants may be drawn from segments of the elites of a society, as is the case with Asian-Indian immigrants; they may represent the enterprising and trading classes, as is the case with Lebanese and Syrians; they may, on the contrary, be drawn from humble and hard-working peasants, as is the case with the early Chinese and Japanese and Sikh immigrants to this country and with Mexicans today. It is more likely immigrants represent the humble, even if the more enterprising humble, than the elites.

In what way then do they bear or represent their "cultures"? Of course, they have cultures—everyone does. But if we are talking about culture in the large, what does Confucianism or Buddhism or Taoism tell us about our early Chinese emigrants, who come from the Southern coastlands, were peasants, and did not speak Mandarin? What does Italy in the large tell us about the typical Italian immigrant of the great age of immigration—poor, from the South, and uneducated? Are we to take him as an example of the culture and civilization of Catholic Europe, of the Mediterranean, of peasant life, all of which may be considered to mark him? From the point of view of explanation, all these categories are too large and diffuse. Catholic Europe has been contrasted with Protestant Europe by Max Weber and other analysts of the effort to explain economic development, but one wonders what connec-

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tion there is between the Catholicism of Italy and the Catholicism of Ireland, the countries from which two of the largest immigrant Catholic groups in the United States come, and whether their common Catholicism will explain much about them.

My point about this first modulation is that culture in the large must be disaggregated to the very specific variants that characterized American immigrants, who came from distinct provinces, classes, and sub-groups of the large culture. Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, anthropologists at the University of Chicago, developed in the 1950s the notion that in culture we deal with both a "great tradition" and the "little traditions." The great tradition refers to the canonical texts, the ceremonies, the priesthood, the great historical past, which may all mean very little to the people of the village, with their little traditions, or to the burgeoning urban population. Parts of the great tradition do get transmitted, but in modified or distorted terms, mixing at the village level with autochthonous traditions that may have little to do with the great tradition, and at the urban level with the universal culture of the mass media. When the people of the village or the people of the growing towns emigrate to the United States, we may indiscriminately label them representatives of the great tradition with little warrant. I think if we went back to those studies and analyses of the great traditions and the little traditions we would find much food for thought in the relationship between culture and the varying fates of immigrant groups in the United States. One thing that we would learn is that whatever the characteristics of the great tradition, it may have little bearing on the little traditions.

Judaism and Confucianism

Another key point that would be brought home to us is that it was rare that the elite bearers of the great tradition were among the immigrants. The experience of Jewish immigrants is typical. In each wave of immigration, from the earliest Sephardic of the seventeenth century, to the German of the nineteenth century, to the East European of the late nineteenth century, there were few men of learning, few rabbis, few carriers of the great tradition—that is, the tradition we

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have in mind when we think of Jewish religion and culture, the tradition of classic texts and roles. I have, therefore, always felt it odd that the disproportionate Jewish achievement in higher education, which in the last half century led to the disproportionate role of Jews in science, scholarship, and the learned professions, is attributed to the Jewish tradition of scholarship. That scholarship is a far cry from the contemporary learning and education in which Jews excel. Indeed, the Jewish "great traditions" looked on almost all contemporary learning and science with suspicion and distaste. Further, few practitioners of traditional Jewish learning came with the immigrants. In time, it is true, such adepts in the traditional high culture came, but I wonder what they, and their efforts to establish traditional rabbinic and talmudic learning in the United States, in which they succeeded, had to do with Jewish achievement in theoretical physics, law, medicine, and a host of other areas based on higher education.

I am perhaps particularly attuned to see the problems in this direct leap to Jewish tradition to explain Jewish success in science and scholarship because I am aware that persons of my generation who went on to substantial achievement generally came from families, such as mine, in which parents had never attended a formal school and had little if any classic Jewish traditional education. Some of these parents were indeed illiterate, and many were not literate beyond the ability to read the prayerbook. Some subtle moves are required to use their great tradition to explain the striking role of the children of East European immigrants in higher education in the early twentieth century.

There are thus many slips and gaps along the way in moving from a great tradition, which we can describe through its major canonic texts, its commentaries, its ceremonies, and its history, to those who may practice various versions of it, little traditions perhaps only distantly related. How much does the great tradition explain in the fate of those so distantly related to it? I have been intrigued by a skeptical comment of the economist John Wong on the possible role of Confucianism in Asia's and Singapore's economic success (there are not many such skeptical comments, which makes this one all the more interesting). He writes that economists will not take the Con-

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fucian explanation seriously until

> it is expressed in a testable hypothesis. It is not enough to argue in general terms that the Confucian ethos is conducive to increased personal savings and hence higher capital formation. It must also be demonstrated forcefully and specifically whether such savings have been productively invested in business or industry or have been squandered in noneconomic spending, such as the fulfillment of personal obligations, which is after all also a part of the Confucian value system. It must also be shown how Confucian values have actually resulted in effective manpower development in terms of promoting the upgrading of skills and not in encouraging merely intellectual self-cultivation or self-serving literary pursuits. A typical Confucian gentleman in the past would have shown open disdain for menial labor.

What Wong is asking skeptically is whether we really can perform the exercise of moving from the great tradition of Confucianism to the success of those societies influenced by the Confucian tradition, or, we may add, the success of ethnic groups that we can connect to it. I have asked the same question about the connection between the great tradition of Jewish learning and the disproportionate success of Jews in contemporary science, learning, and the higher professions. It is too easy to leap from the great tradition to the current groups and individuals that can claim a historical connection. One may see among the current descendants of the great tradition little of its authentic reality. It is not only John Wong who is skeptical of the usefulness of the Confucian tradition or culture for economic development. Sun Yat-sen and other reformers and revolutionaries were not only skeptical about the value of Confucian traditions, they decried them for playing a major role in keeping China backward and denounced Chinese traditional culture for holding back China's economic and political development. Were they wrong? Did Confucianism change, so that in one period it restrained China's modern development and in another it facilitated it? Are we not engaged in an after-the-fact explanation, whether for the Chinese or the Jews? How much has Confucianism to do with the educational and economic success of Chinese in America?

Of course, despite the attention given to the great traditions, the great religions, the Protestant Ethic and its equivalents around the world, we may be able to give a perfectly

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good explanation and defense of the role of culture in economic achievement of ethnic groups by resort to the little traditions, the distinctive cultures of a trading and business community, for example, or of a hard-working and stable peasantry. Successful ethnic groups have come from both backgrounds, as well as others. But whatever the cultural background, a second modulation is necessary in connecting culture to economic success, and that is the circumstances immigrants found on their arrival, the state of the economy, the opportunities available, the character of the areas in which they settled, and the like.

Cultural contradictions

In contemporary social science, we find the effect of a variable by holding all other things equal. Thus, if we are trying to determine the role of prejudice or culture in explaining lower black earnings, we will have to make such adjustments as comparing groups of the same age, the same education, the same geographical area. Since wages differ by area of residence, we will have to take into account differences in rural and urban residence. And there are undoubtedly other potential differences among groups that will have to be taken into account in explaining differences in wages.

The result of such an exercise is generally to reduce or "explain" a difference. There is then a residual, and it is there that we may find the effect of discrimination or of culture. Sometimes indeed the entire difference can be explained away, and there is no residual. But whether there is or is not, how we factor in culture, as against discrimination, always remains a problem.

The problem comes up in setting up the explanatory model. How do we separate cultural from noncultural features that explain difference? Thus every element in the example given above of trying to explain black-white earnings differences mixes cultural with other elements. We want to explain differences in earnings, so we hold age constant. But is not the fact that one group is lower in age than another and has more children also a cultural feature? We want to hold geography constant—people will do better in cities than in the countryside, in the North and West than in the South. But aren't

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there cultural factors in migration and the selection of places to which to migrate? Our comparison will hold family structure constant, noting that the large proportion of female-headed families among blacks lowers average income. But is not family structure a cultural feature par excellence?

The point of such models used to analyze differences is to explain them, but they also have inevitable political consequences. A cultural explanation is generally rejected by the group in question, whether it turns out it is doing better or worse than some average. If it is doing better, it fears others will accuse it of pride and hubris. Drawing attention to their presumably superior culture, it is feared, will lead to envy, anger, and worse. If the group is doing worse, it fears the snobbish disapproval and disdain of the majority. It is of benefit, every group thinks, to be seen as victim, not as superior.

Some examples of this phenomenon: A few decades ago, it was already evident that Asian household incomes were as high as those of whites, which would have seemed on the face of it to dispose of the discrimination issue. But then it was pointed out that if we put education in the model, Asian earnings were not as high as those of whites of the same educational level. There have been efforts to show that there is nothing special about high Jewish earnings. After all, they live in cities, where earnings are higher for all; their average age is higher, and earnings rise with age; they go to better colleges and universities; they are more concentrated in the high-earning professions; they have smaller families, and so and so on. In the end, the Jewish earnings advantage may well be made to disappear by holding all these factors constant. But that does not dispose of the cultural explanation, which is inextricably mixed in with each feature we control to explain difference.

Jews have generally been concerned about the news of their earnings and income advantage getting out. The census does not ask for religion, and thus Jews do not appear in census statistics. Jewish civic organizations concerned with prejudice and anti-Semitism oppose any question on religion in the census, for this and other reasons. Asians, all of whom do get counted in the census as individual races, generally try to explain away the statistical evidence of their success for vari-

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ous reasons, among them the desire of some to hold on to victim status, which may give some benefits. (There are no benefits now to Asian identity for college admissions, but Asians are still considered an underprivileged minority for government contracts.) Others want to hold on to victim status to save the possibility of a Rainbow Coalition of minority groups, and if Asians are better off than the average, their eligibility for this coalition falls into question.

We may observe some odd contortions in the effort to maintain the victim status of Asians—that is, the claim that they are seriously and adversely affected by discrimination despite the present income and occupational profile. Thus consider the remarks of the Chinese-American historian John Kuo Wei Tchen. He tells us, first, that he takes great pleasure every year in the announcement of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners, because so many Asians are among them: "Yet as I have followed press coverage and public discussion of these students, I have become increasingly concerned about the dissonance between their actual high achievements and how those achievements have been construed, declaring Asians a 'model minority'—despite compelling evidence defying overgeneralization." He takes pride in their achievement but resists the idea they are a "model minority."

The nature of his concern over this reputation is not easy to divine. He tells us that a follow-up article to the Westinghouse story in the *New York Times* dealt with Cardozo High School in Queens in New York City, which produced 11 semi-finalists, all Asian. This article led to an op-ed piece by Stephen Graubard, editor of *Daedalus*. Kuo reports, disapprovingly, that Graubard makes stable, two-parent families "the primary cause of Asian student success. Then, in the spirit of social welfare planning, he speculated about what might be done for all those hundreds of thousands of children who did not live in such stable environs.... Graubard assumed that stable single-family [home] neighborhoods provided the prerequisites for success."

Why Kuo resists this seemingly unobjectionable and common interpretation is unclear. We get some hint when he quotes approvingly a letter to the *New York Times* from the Asian student winners at Cardozo in response to the Graubard

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article, which rejects any generalization to explain their success. The letter attacks Graubard's interpretations as "stereotyping ... which in its most extreme form is the root of prejudice, a disease that can never be solved by science." The letter asserts that the parental role in these students' school careers ranged from apathy to intense involvement, and the reasons for student participation and success in the Westinghouse contest were varied and individual. Kuo concludes: "This formulation of Asian student success turned a complex phenomenon into a simplistic and historical [perhaps he means unhistorical?] representation of the unchanging nature of Asian cultures." All this is prelude to the main body of his paper, a study of anti-Chinese prejudice in New York City in the nineteenth century. One is left to conclude there is some connection between the anti-Chinese prejudice of the nineteenth century and the myth of "model minority" success today.

The uses of culture

I have suggested it is not easy scientifically to locate the cultural factors in ethnic group success or failure, and that it is not to anyone's advantage politically to insist on the role of cultural factors, in either ethnic group failure or success.

I believe that even using the best methods and approaches of the contemporary social sciences it is difficult to make a clear case that cultural factors distinctive to one ethnic group or another are responsible for economic success or failure. What we can do from the point of view of social science is to determine the factors that seem regularly to be connected with the economic fate of ethnic groups. The factor that emerges most sharply from research is education. This is also the favored measure for "human capital." It correlates best with later success, in the form of higher-prestige occupations and higher earnings.

In view of the great differences among groups in how well they do in school, and how far they go, one would think that here is a clear case for the significance of culture, because a taste for education would seem to be above all a cultural fact. But the matter is not so simple. The taste for, and success in, education varies by class. Are we to encompass class in cul-

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ture? We could, but then it is not ethnic culture that leads to the success—there is much in common in the working and middle classes of all groups. Further, as I have tried to suggest, when we try to trace back a taste for education to the high culture of a group (Jewish learning, for example), the connections raise some problems. Admittedly an orientation to learning of some type may be transmitted into an orientation to learning of a very different type. This is what may have happened to Jews, as well as to Brahmins, who may have given up Sanskrit for science, and to Chinese, who may have given up the Confucian classics for physics. All of these cases require closer examination than they have received.

One reason for examining the potential cultural factors in educational success, which has emerged as the key measurable factor for economic success, is the idea—as expressed in Graubard's op-ed article referred to above—that we can learn from such cases. The learning is intended to guide interventions into the ways of life of the less successful groups. I believe in the possibility of such learning, but I wonder whether we want to, for political reasons and even for scientific reasons, label whatever we learn as part of the culture of some specific group. Thus many believe based on the research that reading to children will assist them in learning to read. That is a general factor, not connected to any ethnic group. It would be best to advocate it and encourage it for itself, rather than because it contributes to the success of Chinese or Vietnamese children. (Indeed, useful as it may be, it could not have had much to do with the success of second-generation Jews, Chinese, or Japanese, most of whose parents could only have read to them in a non-English language, and probably worked too long hours to read to them at all.)

Undoubtedly, strong support for education among parents is better for children than the reverse. (But recall the Talent-Search-winning Chinese students' reference to the "apathy" of some of their parents.) Yet studies regularly show that African-American parents strongly urge their children to take school seriously, and urge on them the importance of school. All of these factors that may contribute to educational success can be called cultural, but we have to go into them deeply before we find out why practices that seem similar or identical at

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first seem to have such different effects in different groups.

I think culture does make a difference, but that it is very hard to determine *what* in culture makes the difference, as these examples suggest. Whatever it is, I think it will be more subtle than the large characteristics of the great traditions of a culture, because too many different outcomes, at different times, seem compatible with each of the great traditions. They have all had their glories and their miseries, their massacres and their acts of charity, their scholars and their soldiers, their triumphs of intellectual achievement and their descents into silliness. Rather, it makes more sense to think of them as storehouses from which practices suitable and useful for all may emerge. In any case, they have gone through so much change that it is utopian to think that we can apply their lessons, if we can agree on them, in the large. But the specific practices of ethnic and racial groups in the United States, empathetically explored, may well tell us something of use.

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Improving, empowering, dismantling

CHESTER E. FINN, JR. & MARCI KANSTOROOM

EVERYONE agrees that getting and keeping good teachers is key to improving America's schools. How to accomplish this goal, however, is a matter of significant disagreement. While America is blessed with many fine teachers, we don't have enough of them—a problem that is more acute in certain subjects than others, and one that is made even more painfully evident by actual teacher shortages in some communities across the nation.

In devising solutions to the problem of teacher quality, policy makers have put forward three basic approaches: the *regulatory approach*, which seeks more centralized regulation of how teachers are trained and who gets to teach; the *reformist approach*, which gives principals the authority to run their own schools—including the hiring and firing of teachers—and then holds them strictly accountable for student performance; and the *spending approach*, which aims to attract better teachers by raising salaries.

The regulatory strategy is bankrupt. Teacher certification is

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no guarantee of good teaching, and its greatest effect has been to keep many fine prospective teachers from ever entering America's classrooms. The latest regulatory proposals, favored most prominently by Linda Darling-Hammond of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), continue further down this failed path of regulating teacher "inputs" (credentials) rather than teacher "outputs" (student performance).

By contrast, the reformist approach would deregulate the teacher certification process, empower principals to make crucial decisions about faculty and curriculum, and hold them accountable for student performance. To attract and keep good principals and good teachers, however, states and communities must give them the authority and compensation they deserve. For this reason, the reformist approach and the spending approach are not mutually exclusive but complementary strategies for improving teacher quality. In a reformed system, principals would have the means to reward good teachers—a power that current uniform salary schedules deny them. By contrast, more spending without deregulation is likely to be ineffectual, and may even strengthen an education establishment that has proven itself a failure.

Across the United States, the reformist approach is beginning to take hold. After a series of unsuccessful attempts in the 1980s to boost academic achievement by clamping additional regulations on the public schools—three years of high school science instead of two, so many minutes of homework per day, new reading curricula, etc.—many states and communities are now experimenting with freedom, competition, and accountability for student performance. In this spirit, many communities have jettisoned the "one best system" view of education reform. Instead, they authorize individual schools to make key decisions about schedules, curriculum, and personnel, while empowering families to select those schools that best suit their children. Monitoring academic performance and making performance records public are also important parts of the reform agenda. The country's charter schools, almost 2,000 now, are perhaps the most vivid example of this effort to improve education through deregulation. This approach trusts principals to run schools and parents to choose the best schools

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for their children, while at the same time using statewide academic standards and tests to audit and report on actual achievement.

For school reform to succeed, principals must become the CEOs of their schools. Each school—and the person running it—must be held accountable for academic results. Schools should be rewarded (accolades, greater resources, staff promotions, etc.) when they succeed and "intervened in" if they fail. Such accountability only makes sense, however, if principals have the authority to hire the best teachers, manage the school's resources, and build the kind of community of learning that can deliver on its responsibility of educating America's children.

Certifying bad teachers

Recent studies in Tennessee, Boston, and Dallas all find dramatic differences between the performance of youngsters assigned to the best teachers and those assigned to the worst. Clearly, school reform will not succeed unless more teachers have the knowledge and skills to help all their pupils meet high standards. Yet many teachers are not ready to meet this challenge. As many as two million new teachers must be hired in the next decade, and it is reported that a "bidding war" is already underway as states and communities vie to attract more qualified people to their classrooms. Sadly, our present system for recruiting, preparing, and deploying teachers is not up to this dual challenge of quality and quantity.

For decades, the dominant approach to quality control for teachers has been state regulation of teacher certification, which mostly means that all public school teachers are required to graduate from an approved teacher-education school. Teaching candidates typically take courses in "child development," the "foundations of education," "classroom diversity," and so on. Practice teaching is ordinarily required (and is the part that teachers generally find most valuable). There may also be a test of basic skills. But at the center of state-approved, state-regulated teacher education is the study of "pedagogy," which predictably creates a teaching force that is heavily credentialed in various methodologies but not content.

Exacerbating the problem of weak subject mastery is the

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frequent assignment of teachers to courses outside their area of greatest expertise—either as a cost-saving measure, an administrative convenience, or because of instructor shortages in advanced subjects such as math and science. "Foreign education ministers who visit me are just stumped when I try to explain this practice," notes Education secretary Richard Riley. "Their translators simply have no words to describe it."

More than half of history teachers in the United States hold neither majors nor minors in history. The same is true in physics. (Is it any wonder that high-school seniors in the United States trail the world when it comes to knowledge in the sciences?) More troubling still, children attending school in poor and urban areas are least likely to have teachers who have significant mastery of their subjects.

In response to poor teacher quality, most states today are tightening the regulatory vise, making it harder to enter teaching by piling on new requirements for certification. On the advice of high-profile education groups, such as NCTAF, many states are attempting to "professionalize" teacher preparation by hiking their admissions criteria and ensuring that training programs are all accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). That organization is currently revising its accreditation standards to make teacher certification programs longer, more demanding, and more in tune with trendy education ideas and contemporary social concerns.

The purpose of state regulation of teachers is, of course, to ensure that every child has a competent instructor. But not only do the new regulations fail to assure quality, they also prevent the hiring and retention of many fine prospective teachers. Talented liberal-arts graduates shun teaching because of the frustrating certification process. And those who endure the process refer to it as "Mickey Mouse," "a waste of time," and "just plain foolish."

Researchers have struggled to identify the key characteristics in distinguishing good teachers from bad ones before they are hired. The most accurate predictor of classroom success, it turns out, is not teacher certification but verbal ability and, in some fields, subject-matter knowledge. This has been known since the famed Coleman Report of 1966, when teacher verbal

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scores were the only "input" found to have a clear positive relationship to student achievement. Recent studies in Texas and Alabama have confirmed this tie between teacher verbal ability and student achievement. Such evidence suggests that recruiting smarter, abler, better-educated people into teaching will do more to improve school results than more credentialing and more courses in pedagogy.

But the education regulators want to increase certification requirements. The result is easy to predict: Well-educated individuals who are interested in teaching but put off by the cost in time and money of completing a conventional teacher-preparation program will choose other lines of work. The best and the brightest of young Americans have ample career options; if the costs of becoming a teacher are too high, they will do something else.

The false promise of peer review

Would a different kind of regulation work better? Peer review of teacher performance has become popular within the profession as an alternative to traditional input measures. It assumes that good teaching is best determined by other teachers. Thus the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has designed an elaborate method for appraising teacher performance and certifying outstanding teachers. The process is costly and time-intensive. It can lead to sizable rewards, such as the $30,000 bonus that California governor Gray Davis has recommended for NBPTS-certified teachers. Yet today we have no idea whether teachers vetted by the NBPTS are in fact the best teachers as judged by how much and how well their pupils learn. Here, as elsewhere, peer review consists mainly of judging quality by observing inputs and processes rather than actual performance.

Another approach favored by prominent education groups is to develop "teacher standards" that spell out what good teachers should know and what they should be able to do. It sounds great, but most of these standards turn out to be empty slogans. "Teachers organize and manage a social structure in the classroom that enables students to be active participants in literate communities," reads one standard proffered by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support

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Consortium (INTASC). Another, this one from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), reads: "Candidates ... use the comprehensive nature of students' physical, mental, and social well-being to create opportunities for student development and practice of skills that contribute to good health." Such standards often specify that good teachers understand some important concept, such as "how children grow and develop." The absurdity of these standards is that there is no singular way to measure the abstract qualities of good teaching and no one good methodology for being a good teacher. By contrast, it is possible to test a teacher's mastery of a given subject—the very thing that education schools slight.

Still, the idea that more—and more homogeneous—training is the key to solving the country's teacher quality problem has great appeal for states that want to "do something." Peer review sounds terrific, the teacher unions love it, and it has the added virtue of shifting the burden of difficult personnel decisions from state policy makers to the profession itself. Thus a number of governors and legislators have clambered onto the regulatory bandwagon. The result is that the teaching profession has become a near monopoly, restricting entry to a single, heavily regulated path through education schools that are becoming ever more alike.

Performance not credentials

Instead of using degrees earned or "standards" met as indices of quality, we should evaluate teachers based on the only measure that really matters: whether their pupils are learning. Gauging a teacher's contribution to student learning is no pipe dream. Careful statistical analysis can identify the gains that students make during a year and then estimate the effects of individual teachers on their progress. This "value-added" technique is precise, and its results are statistically robust. Used today in one state (Tennessee) and many school districts, it allows principals, policy makers, taxpayers, and parents to see for themselves how much individual teachers are helping students to learn.

Since the best teachers have very diverse backgrounds, states should scrap nearly all the hoops and hurdles that discourage

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good candidates from becoming teachers. Such deregulation would not only expand the pool of possible teachers but also raise its quality. It would devolve personnel decisions to individual schools and their principals, and then hold them accountable for producing results. The role of the state would be to monitor academic performance and ensure that teachers do no harm. In such an environment, good teacher-education programs will thrive and prosper; bad ones will either shut down or be forced to improve once they lose the protection that the regulatory cartel now gives them. Principals will decide for themselves where to hire teachers and what training individual teachers should have.

The popularity of such programs as Teach for America, which places top liberal-arts graduates without formal education credentials into troubled rural and urban public schools, indicates that the prospect of teaching without first having to spend years taking "pedagogy" courses appeals to some of the nation's brightest college graduates. Over 4,000 people applied for roughly 1,000 Teach for America slots this year. Moreover, since 1994, more than 3,000 veterans of the armed forces have made the transition from military service to teaching through the Troops to Teachers program.

A number of states have created "alternative certification" programs to streamline this process and attract more talented teachers. Such programs normally require a bachelor's degree, passage of a competency test, and an intensive (but compressed) regimen of specialized preparation, often undertaken while on the job. Teachers with alternative certification are more likely to have bachelor's degrees in math and science, two fields with chronic shortages of qualified teachers. They are also more likely to be members of minority groups. Yet the regulatory strategy would shut down such programs or force them to imitate conventional education programs.

Where personnel decisions have been deregulated, schools rush to hire well-educated persons, whether or not they possess standard certification. Private schools routinely employ unlicensed instructors, which tends to increase the proportion of their teachers who have graduated from top colleges and universities and who have done serious study in their chosen field. In New Jersey, the first state to implement alternative

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certification, a quarter of all teachers now enter the profession through that route. The few studies of alternative certification that have been done find that students of such teachers perform at least as well as students of conventionally licensed teachers. (In New Jersey, it was also found that alternative-certification teachers have lower attrition.)

Trading accountability for autonomy does not mean sloughing off all regulations. Every child should be able to count on having a teacher with a solid general education, one who possesses deep subject-area knowledge and a clean record. The state has an obligation to ensure that all prospective teachers meet this minimal standard. Thus states should perform background checks on candidates for teaching positions. To ensure that those who teach our children are themselves well educated, states could reasonably insist that teaching candidates have at least a bachelor's degree in some academic subject.

States should also ensure that teachers know the subjects they teach. While competency isn't the only important quality for effective teaching, it is surely a prerequisite. There are two ways to accomplish this: Require teachers to major in the subjects that they teach or to pass subject-area tests. Neither approach will guarantee good teaching, but they are both superior to today's widespread disregard of subject-matter mastery.

Power to the principals

With deregulation, hands-on personnel decisions become the key to building a qualified team of teachers. Principals must become CEOs, who have real authority to select promising candidates from a diverse applicant pool, assess their classroom strengths and weaknesses, ensure that they receive whatever training they need to be effective, and replace bad teachers with good ones.

Such leadership is already highly prized in private and charter schools and in the handful of conventional public schools that have allowed principals to act as team-builders. In most public schools across the nation, however, the principal is more middle manager than CEO, particularly when it comes to staffing. Teachers are assigned by the superintendent's office; their job security is protected by tenure laws and collec-

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tive bargaining contracts; their pay is fixed by uniform salary schedules; and their workplace preferences are honored by "seniority" rules that let veteran teachers choose their schools whether the current staff wants them or not.

To be sure, maverick principals often manage to work around those strictures, cajoling and finagling the staff they want, finding ways to reward those they really want to keep, and quietly shedding those who do not perform. (Unfortunately, in the current, regulated system, that often means shipping inept teachers to schools with less astute or well-connected leaders, a cycle known in the field as the "dance of the lemons.")

In today's dysfunctional system, it should be no surprise that risk takers and original thinkers have trouble getting principal's jobs in the first place. They are screened out by state licensure systems that, just as with teachers, depend chiefly on paper credentials from colleges of education. Principals must actually pass through two such screens: first to become public school teachers, which nearly all of them once were, and then again to receive an administrator's certificate, which pales in comparison with degrees from topflight business schools, military leadership schools, or other institutions that prepare executives.

Why would a risk taker or innovator submit to such second-rate certification, particularly if he is then cast as a "middle manager" in a big public school system where the truly consequential decisions are made downtown? Nor is the pay much of an inducement. High school principals earn $77,000 on average, and elementary school principals only earn $67,000, sums nearly equaled by senior teachers who have fewer headaches and shorter hours.

Catch-22

Not surprisingly, such widespread weakness in the principal's office leads many to reject giving principals more authority. Yet private and charter schools have shown that such reform efforts can work. And the reluctance to empower principals often emanates from teacher unions, state and local bureaucracies, and innumerable education "experts" who would be menaced by giving principals greater authority over personnel. Strong principals are more apt to resist the latest education-

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school dogmas and dictates, and to threaten the job security of the credentialed class of failing teachers. These groups prize the uniformity of state certificates, fixed salary schedules, and central-office placement decisions. They are content with "middle managers" in the principal's office and pleased to voice doubts about reform schemes that would change the balance of power. It's a Catch-22 situation: We won't get great principals until they have the authority to make key decisions; and yet principals aren't likely to get such authority until there is greater confidence in their skills and judgments. And without giving principals the freedom to hire the best teachers and run their schools in the way they see fit, it is difficult, if not impossible, to hold them accountable for student performance.

Those who have worked in private schools and charter schools know that strong leadership is crucial to academic success. They know that only schools with a clear vision, a fellowship of committed teachers, and a strong but accountable principal can turn around the decades of failure that plague many of America's schools. Public school principals could become CEOs, but not without widespread reform, deregulation, and a change of mentality. Former New York City schools chancellor Joe Fernandez once estimated that most of the thousand-plus principals working for him were mediocre and as many as a quarter were incompetent. The system attracts, keeps, and protects such people, or it so frustrates talented individuals that they flee to the suburbs or leave education altogether for jobs where their talents are rewarded and respected.

Forty years of experience suggests that more regulations and centralized control will not get us better teachers and principals. America must chart a new course: Instead of building a monopolized system of teacher credentials, education reformers must start attracting the best and the brightest into America's classrooms. Instead of turning principals into functionaries, reformers must give them the freedom and authority to build real communities of learning. Only then can we expect real accountability and improvement in the nation's schools.

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Homeschooling comes of age

PATRICIA M. LINES

THE rise of homeschooling is one of the most significant social trends of the past half century. This reemergence of what is in fact an old practice has occurred for a distinctly modern reason: a desire to wrest control from the education bureaucrats and reestablish the family as central to a child's learning. Homeschooling is almost always a matter of choice. Schools are generally available, but homeschooling families have chosen not to use them.

The rapid growth of the homeschooling movement took the professional education establishment by surprise. When I estimated in 1985 that about 50,000 children were being homeschooled, one expert called it "wishful thinking, or at least artful advocacy." In 1990, as a researcher with the Department of Education, I suggested that the number had probably grown to 250,000 to 355,000 children. At the time, I based my estimate on three different sources: data from state education agencies; distribution of curricular packages for homeschoolers; and state homeschool associations' estimates

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of their constituencies. As state data became more reliable, I turned to that source alone. The number continued to grow, and critics began citing my estimates.

The numbers are still growing. If states with reliable information are good indicators for the rest of the country, the number of homeschoolers nearly tripled in the five years from 1990–91 to 1995–96, when there were, according to the best possible estimate, about 700,000 homeschoolers. There is evidence, such as Florida's annual survey of homeschooling filers, that the population is growing at around 15 to 20 percent per year. I know of no state where the number is declining. It is extremely difficult to predict when the growth will taper off. If it keeps growing at this rate, there would be around 1.5 to 2 million children homeschooling by 2000–01 (about 3 to 4 percent of school-aged children nationwide). For a number of different reasons, parents are losing faith in the American classroom, and homeschooling is becoming a serious (and growing) alternative.

Private schools have traditionally provided havens for those who dissent from the public school curriculum. Indeed, the competitive impact of homeschooling probably falls most heavily on private schools. Surveys suggest that among homeschooled children who previously attended a school, a disproportionate number attended a private school. A movement toward unstructured learning, strong and vigorous among some private schools in the 1960s, is now languishing, having lost many of its students to the liberal wing of the homeschooling movement and to various public school-choice programs. The Christian schools that sprung up in the 1980s have also lost students to homeschooling, but their growth curve was sufficiently strong that they remain robust. These schools also compete on a turf where public schools must not go—religious education. Still, when one might expect private schools to be growing, they are holding even. Homeschooling has taken up the slack.

The contemporary homeschooling movement began sometime around mid century as a liberal, not a conservative, alternative to the public school. A handful of families (possibly as many as 10,000) in the late fifties and early sixties found schools too rigidly conservative. They pursued instead a liberal philosophy of education as advocated by educators such

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as the late John Holt, who believed that the best learning takes place without an established curriculum, and that the child should pursue his own interests with the support and encouragement of parents and other adults.

Then, in the 1980s, as the school culture drifted to the left, conservative and religious families were surprised to find themselves in a countercultural position. Many turned to Christian schools while others began homeschooling. Some believed religious duty required them to teach their own children; others sought to integrate religion, learning, and family life. Both the left and right wings of homeschooling are active today, and many families have both philosophical and religious reasons for their choice. Joining them are many homeschoolers who simply seek the highest quality education for their child, which they believe public and even private schools can no longer provide.

An old idea

Homeschooling is not a new idea or practice. For centuries children have learned outside formal school settings, even when schools were readily available. Thinkers from a variety of philosophical traditions have frowned upon formal schooling for a number of reasons. John Locke, for example, maintained that the primary aim of education was virtue, and that the home was the best place to teach it. Even John Dewey expressed regrets about formal schooling:

> A society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with common aims.... *The radical reason that the present school cannot organize itself as a natural social unit is because just this element of common and productive activity is absent.*

Dewey held that school had been artificially "set apart" from society, and had become "so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life" that it was "the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience—the mother of all discipline worth the name." He observed that "where the parent is intelligent enough to recognize what is best for the child, and is able to supply what is needed, we find the child learning." Dewey did not advocate homeschooling. He hoped instead to mimic the ideal home environment to

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create the ideal school. He thought teaching in the home could be done "only in a comparatively meager and haphazard manner." But given the choice between homeschooling and a rigid school system intent only on imparting information, Dewey might well have recommended homeschooling.

What is often forgotten is that in the broad sweep of time, universal, compulsory, and comprehensive schooling is a relatively new invention. Not until the nineteenth century did state legislatures begin requiring local governments to build schools and parents to enroll their children in them. Even then, compulsory requirements extended to only a few months a year. Not until the mid-twentieth century was universal high-school graduation a realistic goal. Even at this point, some traditional communities—such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and Amish—continued to keep their school-aged children at home. Only recently have we begun to treat schooling as a full-time affair entrusted to professional teachers. And yet, in such a short span of time, most of the nation has come to accept classroom schooling as the norm, and so the recent upsurge in homeschooling has come to many as a surprise.

Three and four decades ago homeschooling was an unacceptable practice for satisfying compulsory education requirements in most states. The early pioneers of the contemporary movement often stayed "underground," and those who were discovered often faced fines or even jail. Gradually, state legislatures changed their laws, however, and all states now accept homeschooling as a legally valid alternative. Still, regulations vary from state to state. At a minimum, a family must file some basic information with either the state or local education agency. Some states have additional requirements, such as evaluation of homeschool students or minimal educational levels or testing for the homeschooling teacher. Many families still stay "underground"—out of fear that the legal environment will change again or because they disagree with particular regulations.

A homeschooling profile

The main difficulty in judging the scope of the homeschooling movement is limited and imperfect data. There is no definitive list of all homeschoolers in any locality, so the researcher usually must rely on a limited number of questions

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in a federally sponsored survey or on limited samples. If the latter, the sampled lists represent self-selected groups: members of a homeschooling association; those who file papers with the state in those states that require it; and subscribers to homeschooling magazines and newsletters. In addition, some homeschoolers refuse to respond to particular surveys: For example, a paranoid homeschooler may refuse to participate in a government survey while answering one from a homeschooling organization. Or a secular family that homeschools their children may not respond to a survey connected to, say, Bob Jones University. To make matters even more difficult, a substantial and influential number of homeschoolers are philosophically opposed to cooperating with researchers.

With these cautions in mind, however, it is still possible to make some important observations about the movement. According to the surveys, the typical homeschooling family is religious, conservative, white, middle-income, and better educated than the general population. Homeschoolers are more likely to be part of a two-parent family, and there are usually two children of school age who are homeschooling and a third, usually younger child in the family. The mother typically assumes the largest share of the teaching responsibility, although fathers almost always pitch in, and in a substantial number of families—possibly as many as one out of ten—fathers take the primary responsibility. Despite this predominant profile, it is also clear that the full range of American families are trying or considering homeschooling.

Future growth could occur most rapidly among ethnic minorities. Though African Americans and other non-Caucasian groups are under-represented among homeschoolers, the next generation of minorities is seriously considering it. In a survey of selected classes at Vanderbilt University and Nashville State Tech (a selective private university and a two-year college), almost half (45.3 percent) of the African-American students said "yes" or "maybe" when asked if they would homeschool their own children in the future. Among other non-Caucasian groups, two-thirds indicated "yes" or "maybe." In contrast, less than one-fourth of the white students said this. The survey was small (254 students) and nonrandom, representing students enrolled in the classes of the researchers, whose in-

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fluence was perhaps stronger among the non-Caucasian students. Nonetheless, the results are startling. Public educators who count on the loyalty of ethnic minorities as the backbone of their big-city clientele may be in for yet another surprise.

The curriculum

While both progressive and religious reasons for homeschooling remain important, a plurality of families say they are turning to homeschooling because they are dissatisfied with the quality of the public schools. Take, for example, a Florida Department of Education survey sent to homeschooling families for over a decade. Until 1994–95, the majority of families named "religion" as the reason why they chose homeschooling. This shifted in 1995 when, for the first time, the single most important reason for homeschooling became "dissatisfaction with the public school instructional program." Thirty-seven percent of parents gave this reason, compared to 29.6 percent who cited "Religious Reasons" that year. In 1995–96, the last year in which this survey question was asked, 42 percent of families cited dissatisfaction with the public school environment—especially safety, drugs, and adverse peer pressure. Religious reasons trailed at 27 percent, dissatisfaction with public school instruction at 16 percent, and other reasons at 15 percent.

A media stereotype would have homeschooling children start the day with a prayer and a salute to the flag and then gather around the kitchen table for structured lessons. This is not only atypical, it fails to present the full range of practices. Most homeschooling children spend time at libraries, museums, factories, nursing homes, churches, or classes offered at a local public school, a community college, a parks department, or elsewhere. Normally, parents plan and implement the learning program, although sometimes they find a tutor or older children organize their own independent study. It may be structured or unstructured; it may be affiliated with a public or private school; and it often involves shared lessons with other homeschooling families.

Critics of homeschooling sometimes highlight the lack of educational resources available to homeschoolers. But the resources can be found. Local support groups share experiences,

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meet for common activities, and help newcomers get started. Homeschooling associations provide advice and information, run conferences on legal, philosophical, and pedagogical issues, and review educational materials at exhibition booths. Electronic homeschool discussion groups abound. Parents also find guidance in books, magazines, and newsletters. Topics range from legal issues to advice on learning disabilities and how to avoid burnout.

The resources also reflect the philosophical and pedagogical diversity of homeschoolers. The magazine *Drinking Gourd*, named after a folk song about the underground railway, provides articles and book reviews emphasizing cultural and ethnic diversity. *Nathan News*, published by the National Challenged Homeschoolers Associated Network, provides articles by parents and experts on such topics as "Auditory Memory Strategies and Activities," "Custom Fitting a Program for the LD Child," or "My Recipe for IEP." In addition, parents obtain advice, texts, services, and curricula from public and private schools and other institutions. Alaska has served homeschooling students for decades through correspondence teaching. In California, a child may enroll in a public school independent-study program but base his studies in the home (the state does not like to call this "homeschooling"). Some states, such as Washington and Iowa, give families the right to enroll their children part-time in their local public schools and allow the district to claim a portion of the state's per pupil assistance for the enrollment. Some school districts sponsor centers where families may obtain resources, instructional support, and classes. Usually interested teachers or other public school professionals start these experimental partnerships. These programs are too new and varied to assess, but both teachers and parents who participate in them seem excited by the possibilities.

Report card

When people ask—How well do homeschoolers do?—they usually want to know about test scores. Of course, many homeschoolers reject this criterion, since their mission is to impart not simply skills but a particular set of values. That said, virtually all of the reported data show that homeschooled

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children score above average, sometimes well above average. Self-selection may affect this result, just as it affects other aspects of homeschooling research. Further, even where state law requires testing, substantial numbers of homeschoolers do not comply. Still, the available evidence suggests steady success. For example, Alaska, which has tested children in its homeschooling program for several decades, finds them, as a group, above average. In a very different study, commissioned by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a conservative Christian organization, Lawrence Rudner of the University of Maryland collected and analyzed results from the 12,000 students nationwide who had used the Bob Jones University testing services. The homeschooled children placed in the 62nd to 91st percentile of national norms, depending on the grade level and test subject area. Of course, we don't know how these same children would do in school. But there is certainly no evidence to suggest that homeschooling harms academic achievement.

Significantly, a handful of studies suggest that student achievement for homeschoolers has no relation to the educational attainment of the homeschooling parent. This is consistent with tutoring studies that indicate that the education level of a tutor has little to do with the achievement of a tutored child. One explanation might be that the advantages of one-to-one learning outweigh the advantages of professional training.

Homeschoolers have also had considerable success in college admissions. Karl M. Bunday, a homeschooler from Minnesota, maintains a web page that, at last check, lists over 900 colleges and universities that have admitted homeschoolers. Several years ago, I telephoned a small group of admissions officers to find out what they do with homeschoolers' applications. All (California Institute of Technology, Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges, Howard University, Stanford University, the University of Texas, and the University of Wisconsin) indicated that they are pleased to consider homeschooled teenagers for admission. All said that they would accept standardized admission test scores along with supportive material describing the subjects studied and other relevant experience. Some thought that well-qualified homeschoolers bring fresh diversity to their student body. Most admissions officers guessed that they had

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admitted as many as 1 percent of their undergraduates on this basis. Most also thought that some homeschoolers had slipped in unnoticed, submitting a high-school transcript obtained through a special program or a correspondence school.

Critics often cite inadequate socialization as the fatal flaw in homeschooling. But such criticisms rest on certain professional assumptions about the nature of "healthy socialization." For the fact is that many homeschoolers worry about the values that predominate in the public school program and about negative peer pressure. They believe that it is preferable for children to spend more time with adults. But this does not mean that homeschooled children are isolated from their peers. They participate in homeschool support groups, scouting groups, churches, and other associations.

No one knows for certain what is the best kind of socialization; and there are important disagreements about what makes for a good and healthy child. Still, one can inquire, more narrowly and always imperfectly, about specific measurable elements of social development. For example, in one study of the social skills of homeschoolers and nonhomeschoolers, both groups scored as "well-adjusted," with comparable scores on scales measuring aggression, reliance on others, perception of support from others, perceptions of limits to be followed, and interpersonal relations among family members. Not surprisingly, the nonhomeschoolers scored somewhat higher in resolving interpersonal problems with other children. In another controlled study, a researcher videotaped 70 homeschooled children and 70 school children at play. Trained counselors viewed the videotapes and rated individual children without knowing the child's school status: They found the homeschooled children to have fewer behavioral problems. Of course, these kinds of studies are necessarily limited, but the findings provide no basis to question the social development of homeschooled children.

Public acceptance

All evidence suggests that homeschooling is here to stay, although it is hard to say when the growth will peak. Now that all states have adopted flexible legislation and now that resources for homeschoolers are readily available, a significant factor contributing to growth will be public support. Accord-

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ing to one survey, 95 percent of homeschoolers say they want or need "encouragement from family, friends, church, and community." In the 1980s, most Americans withheld support and encouragement. In 1985, only 16 percent of respondents to the annual *Phi Delta Kappan* Gallup poll thought that the homeschool movement was a "good thing"; 73 percent thought it was a "bad thing." By 1988, 28 percent rated it a good thing and 59 percent rated it a bad thing. By 1997, the approval rating had grown to 36 percent while the disapproval rating edged down to 57 percent.

In 1988, Gallup also asked whether parents should have a legal right to homeschool. A majority (53 percent) said they "should"; 39 percent said they "should not." When asked—"Do you think that the homeschools should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification standards as the public schools?"—82 percent said "should" while only 12 percent said "should not." In 1997, the poll also asked whether "homeschools should or should not be required to guarantee a minimum level of educational quality"—88 percent responded affirmatively. The trend appears to be toward acceptance, so long as there is regulation.

But the most important factor in determining the future of homeschooling is the state of public and private schooling. In the nineteenth century, when public schools were Protestant in flavor, a vigorous Catholic school movement sprang up. Today, as the schools have become increasingly secular, a vigorous Christian (largely conservative Protestant) school movement developed. Today, both public and private schools operate like small bureaucracies, depending on professional expertise for most aspects of their program. As long as there are parents who object to the bureaucratic nature of today's schools, I would expect homeschooling to thrive.

Good citizens

Critics see homeschoolers as isolationist, atomistic, and even undemocratic. They think homeschooling violates the ideal of education as a public obligation—one that must be met, at least in part, through cooperative exchange within a community. But is this really an accurate picture of homeschooling? The hard evidence suggests that the vast majority of

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homeschooling families are more active in civic affairs than public school families.

Christian Smith and David Sikkink of the University of North Carolina found, based on responses to the 1996 National Household Education Survey, that homeschooling parents, along with other families who choose private schools, demonstrate higher levels of participation at almost every level of civic activity than do families who send their children to public schools. This included those choosing Catholic schools, other private religious schools, secular private schools, and homeschooling. Each of these groups were more likely to vote, contribute money to political causes, contact elected officials about their views, attend a public meeting or rally, or belong to community groups and volunteer associations. Smith and Sikkink found this to be true even after they compared only those families with similar education, income, age, race, family structure, region, and number of hours per week that parents worked. These characteristics explained some, but not all, of the higher civic and associational activity of the families who had chosen private schools or homeschooling.

There is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that homeschoolers are interested in political efforts to reform education in general, and are especially interested in issues that affect homeschooling directly. Homeschoolers are capable of concerted political action. Several national and state organizations are capable of mobilizing large numbers of constituents wherever and whenever their interests are at stake. Probably the largest of these is HSLDA. Headed by Michael P. Farris, it employs a large legal staff specializing in homeschooling law. The organization routinely monitors developments in every state and keeps its membership informed of the legal limits on the authority of education officials. It is ready to negotiate or litigate where it believes its members' interests are threatened. An affiliated organization, the National Center for Home Education (NCHE), has a congressional-action program with a sophisticated electronic communication system. Other organizations, such as Clonlara Home Based Education (a secular institution located in Michigan and offering support to homeschoolers throughout the world), do the same for their constituencies. State associations are also active. As a result,

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efforts to pass stricter regulations or rules that threaten the authority of parents to homeschool their children are likely to face organized and informed opposition and sometimes lawsuits.

So far, homeschoolers have succeeded in winning a number of favorable policy changes—most notably, changes in state compulsory education laws. Homeschoolers have also flexed their political muscle in Congress. In 1994, Congressman George Miller offered a minor amendment to an omnibus education bill that, on one interpretation, would have required states to make sure all schools, including homeschools, had certified teachers. This was not explicit, and no one in Congress intended this. Worried nonetheless, HSLDA urged its membership to contact key Congressional offices, swamping targeted offices with mail and telephone calls. Representatives fell over each other to appease the homeschooling lobby. Congressmen Harold E. Ford, Jr., then chair of the education committee, and Dale E. Kildee offered an amendment that expressly excluded homeschooling from any provisions in the legislation. During floor debates, representatives praised homeschooling: One confessed that he was homeschooled as a child, and several proudly announced that their grandchildren were homeschooled. The Ford-Kildee amendment passed 424 to 1. Homeschoolers have also won federal legislation assuring equal treatment in access to federal loans and grants for postsecondary education.

The future

It is too early to tell whether homeschooling will establish itself as a major alternative to the modern school. But some things are clear: Homeschooling is becoming more common and more widely accepted. American families from diverse backgrounds resort to homeschooling because they are dissatisfied with the philosophy, the content, or the quality of American schools. The great majority of homeschooling families are not separatists and isolationists but active members of civil society. They seek to improve this nation, but they want to raise and educate their children in the meantime. Ultimately, they may help to inspire a great renewal of American education, or at least preserve values and ideas that are out of fashion within the education establishment.

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The spirit of a free man

DIANA SCHAUB

THE life and writings of Frederick Douglass are far from forgotten. For the last 30 years, the figure of Frederick Douglass has been a textbook staple. Every schoolchild can be presumed to have heard the dramatic story of the runaway slave become abolitionist leader, to have gazed upon his leonine visage, and read at least a boxed excerpt from one of his three autobiographies. In the better high schools, Douglass's first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, is often assigned as supplementary reading (sadly, even when high schools assign primary texts, they are viewed as supplementary, not primary). Moreover, while it is fashionable to draw attention to the clay feet of other American greats (to the point of slinging mud onto them if need be), Frederick Douglass still receives the hero's treatment.

Yet institutionalized reverence, even when fully deserved, can be deadening. Douglass now has something of a George Washington problem. Students have heard the same old stories intoned piously year after year—a fact I learned when I started to give a talk on Douglass at a Baltimore public high school, only to be greeted with sighs and groans of "not him again." A century and more ago, the case was otherwise; then Douglass was encountered first by way of live testimonials. In "The Intellectuals and the Boston Mob," Booker T. Washington described the galvanizing effect:

> Even before I had learned to read books or newspapers, I remember hearing my mother and other coloured people in our part of the country speak about Frederick Douglass's wonderful life and achievements. I heard so much about Douglass when I was a boy that one of the reasons why I wanted to go to school and learn to read was that I might read for myself what he had written and said.

Douglass, however, was not part of the curriculum. As Wash-

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ington pointed out, "the stories we read in school were all concerned with the success and achievements of white boys and men." Regardless of race, Washington confessed that he always took "a great deal of satisfaction in the lives of men who had risen by their own efforts from poverty to success. It is a great thing for a boy to be able to read books of that kind." Nonetheless, the inspiration to be drawn from such stories was vitiated by racism and self-doubt. When the youthful Washington spoke of emulating white heroes ("what others had done some of us might also be able to do"), his schoolmates discounted the possibility, citing white hostility to black achievement. Washington's unanswerable rejoinder was Frederick Douglass.

Washington sought out Douglass's autobiography on his own and read it over and over. It had the power to offset all of the negative forces—forces that Washington in no way minimizes. Indeed, he insists on their deleterious impact:

> It makes a great deal of difference in the life of a race, as it does in the life of an individual, whether the world expects much or little of that individual or of that race. I suppose that every boy and every girl born in poverty have felt at some time in their lives the weight of the world against them. What the people in the communities did not expect them to do it was hard for them to convince themselves that they could do.

With the weight of the world on one side of the scale and the example of Frederick Douglass on the other, the balance managed to tip toward self-confidence and hope.

W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington's rival for leadership in the early years of the twentieth century, agreed with Washington about at least one thing: the weightiness of Douglass. In his essay "The Talented Tenth," DuBois says:

> There was Purvis and Remond, Pennington and Highland Garnett, Sojourner Truth and Alexander Crummel, and above all, Frederick Douglass—what would the abolition movement have been without them? They stood as living examples of the possibilities of the Negro race, ... —they were the men who made American slavery impossible.

This knowledge ought now to be the common possession of all Americans. The mainstream neglect of Douglass, typical of the historiography of the first half of the twentieth century, has been remedied. At mid century, when Philip S. Foner sought a publisher for his path-breaking multi-volume edition of Douglass's journalism, speeches, and letters, no university or

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commercial press was interested. International Publishers, the official Communist publishing house subsidized by the Soviet Union, brought the volumes out. Today, all three of Douglass's autobiographies are readily available in numerous editions and the Library of America has brought them together, as certifiable classics, in one well-produced volume.†

Like the curricular inclusion of Douglass, this canonization represents both a great gain and a real danger—the danger of petrification. The Communist publisher, Alexander Trachtenberg, was wrong if he thought that Douglass could be mustered on the side of "Amerika," but he was right to feel the challenge in Douglass's words. The challenge is still there, in part at least because—despite the civil rights revolution—racial tensions, troubles, inequalities, and memories are still with us. As Douglass put it: "The destiny of the nation has the Negro for its pivot." So long as that remains true, knowledge of the principles and statesmanship of Douglass can serve as a standard by which to judge current policies and contemporary race leadership. Liberals, in particular, need to confront Douglass's astringent arguments against the cultivation of black race pride and his compelling insistence on the duty of self-emancipation and self-elevation. One shouldn't admire the life, and then dismiss as out-of-date the convictions that would make such a life achievable by others.

DuBois had predicted in 1903 that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line." His prediction must now be extended to the new century. Yet, even if the twenty-first century were to fulfill millenarian hopes of racial harmony, Douglass's writings would still have the power to provoke and enlighten, for they contain profound reflections, quite beyond race, on the meaning of human freedom, on the paradoxes of opportunity, on the recognition of Providence, and on the strange pathways of true learning. Washington was right: "It is a great thing ... to be able to read books of that kind."

Three Lives

Born into slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore (c. 1817), Douglass fled north to freedom in 1838, becoming within a few years a powerful and popular speaker on the antislavery

† Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave; My Bondage and My Freedom; Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. The Library of America. 1,126 pp. $35.00.

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lecture circuit. His oratory was soon so accomplished that audiences began to doubt his claimed slave origin and fugitive status. How could such a magnificent intellect, bodied forth in such commanding language, have arisen out of the soul-destroying institution of slavery? Precisely to avoid these sorts of suspicions and puzzlements, Douglass's white abolitionist mentors had advised him to stick to simple narration and, they cautioned, "better have a *little* of the plantation manner ... 'tis not best that you seem too learned." Douglass, however, could not tamp himself down: "I must speak just the word that seemed to *me* the word to be spoken *by* me."

With the aim of proving his credentials, Douglass then published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), revealing names and places of his former life. It established him as the genuine article, but also left him dangerously exposed to recapture. (He accordingly spent the next two years lecturing throughout the United Kingdom, returning only after English friends purchased his freedom.) The *Narrative*, though a mere 87 pages, did much more than name names. With intense economy, it documented the horrors of slavery in the supposedly mild upper-south.

Ten years later (1855), Douglass published *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Along with a vastly expanded treatment of his life in slavery (121 additional pages, more than doubling the initial *Narrative*), this second autobiography contained 50 pages of new material on his life in freedom, and another 50 pages of extracts from his speeches. Although the title and structure of the volume suggest a life radically divided by opposing circumstances, what emerges most strikingly is the integrity and consistency of Douglass's character. His bondage and his freedom were both distinctively *his*—and in that quite unlike the ordinary experience of those conditions.

The trajectory toward independence, which Douglass had been on all his life, continued during his early career as an abolitionist. After returning from his overseas tour, Douglass resolved to launch his own antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*, against the wishes of William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of *The Liberator* and leader of the abolitionist movement. Douglass's colleagues, who seemed to regard themselves as his "handlers," were not happy about either the paper or his relocation from the Boston area to Rochester, New York, perhaps fearing the independence of mind that would accompany Douglass's independence of action. And it was true that this physical break did culminate in a more substantive, doctrinal

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break, when Douglass rejected the essential Garrisonian dogma that the U.S. Constitution was a proslavery document. According to the Garrisonians, the Constitution was "a covenant with Death and an agreement with Hell" under which no opponent of slavery could, in good conscience, either vote or hold office. Moral purity was all in all to the Garrisonians. As radically apolitical pacifists, they demanded the dissolution of a corrupt Union, insisting moreover that disunion be accomplished by moral suasion alone, not force of arms.

It is impossible to overestimate the significance of Douglass's about-face on this question of constitutional interpretation. (Garrison, unable to credit an honest difference of opinion, denounced Douglass's "apostasy" and "treachery.") Once Douglass came to view the Constitution as "a glorious liberty document" that might "be wielded in behalf of emancipation," he became a very different sort of abolitionist from the no-government types who regarded slavery as just the most visible form of the violence endemic to the state. As he shifted from foe to friend of the regime, Douglass developed a powerful new rhetoric, calling not for disunion but for an America true to its own founding principles. Many subsequent black leaders have understood the appeal of a reform-minded patriotism. Witness the language of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech: "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir." Douglass pioneered the combination of praise for the fathers' principles and vitriol for the sons' practice. For a sustained demonstration, of which the following is a small sample, see "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" (1852):

> Fellow-citizens, I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad: it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a bye-word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement; the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet you cling to it as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! Be warned! Be warned!

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In the third autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1881, the section on slavery was scaled back by 20 percent, and 200 pages were added covering the years from 1855-81. The new realism made possible by Douglass's rejection of Garrison's pacifism and nonresistance is much in evidence here, as Douglass's arsenal of weapons against slavery and second-class citizenship enlarged to include both bullets and ballots. Douglass openly defended the natural right of slaves to kill their masters; Jefferson, of course, had admitted the right as well. Douglass secretly funded John Brown—opposing, however, the raid on Harper's Ferry and pleading with Brown to return to his original plan of running off slaves by means of guerrilla infiltration of the South. And Douglass welcomed the war when it came.

The third volume contains valuable material on Douglass's activities during the Civil War, especially his campaign for the black man "to get an eagle on his button, a musket on his shoulder, and the star-spangled banner over his head." Once blacks were admitted as soldiers, Douglass worked as a recruiter for the first colored regiments, the 54th and 55th Massachusetts (signing up his two sons first). At the same time, Douglass pushed for equal treatment of black soldiers with respect to wages, rations, equipment, promotion, and protection (e.g., Douglass called upon the North to insist that captured black soldiers be part of prisoner-of-war exchanges, despite the Confederacy's threat to treat them as felons).

In urging black enlistments, Douglass was thinking as much about the future incorporation of blacks into the polity as he was about their immediate contribution to the war effort. It was essential that blacks be objects of respect rather than simply objects of pity. Soldiership would help to wipe away the taint of servility, in the minds of both blacks and whites. Of the assault of the 54th on Fort Wagner (the final scene of the movie *Glory*), Douglass wrote: "In that terrible battle, under the wing of night, more cavils in respect of the quality of negro manhood were set at rest than could have been during a century of ordinary life and observation." Moreover, Douglass was certain that access to the cartridge-box would culminate in access to the ballot-box and jury-box: "He who fights the battles of America may claim America as his country—and have that claim respected." After the war, Douglass insisted on that claim of citizenship—"Old Man Eloquent" was indispensable to the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment.

Among the wonderful moments in the third autobiography

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are the accounts of Douglass's interviews with President Lincoln. It's delightful to think of these two—the most superior men of the nineteenth century—meeting and conversing. Along with detailing their policy discussions (and disagreements), Douglass comments on Lincoln's personal manner: "Mr. Lincoln was not only a great President, but a GREAT MAN—too great to be small in anything. In his company I was never in any way reminded of my humble origin, or of my unpopular color." This was unlike the reception Douglass sometimes received from presumably ultra-progressive types, who would say things like: "Mr. Douglass, I will walk to meeting with you; I am not afraid of a black man." Of such acute color-consciousness, Douglass quipped that a man may "stand up so straight as to lean backward." One is reminded of liberal faculty members who, with the professed aim of exploding stereotypes, call upon students to fill a blackboard with noxious lists of racial and ethnic characterizations, or who expect minority students to serve as racial spokesmen.

Liberation theology

Douglass offers a model of how to handle discrimination, of both the well- and ill-intentioned varieties. Always he sought to "expose the absurdity of this spirit of caste," but he pursued that end in different ways, ranging from humor to verbal protest to physical resistance. Given the amount of traveling that Douglass did, he frequently encountered prejudice and proscription in railcars, steamboats, stagecoaches, and public houses (in addition to mob violence during his years as an abolitionist speaker). His refusal to submit to Jim Crow exclusions led at times to "extremely rough" treatment but also to surprising acceptances and breakthroughs (e.g., integrating the Rochester public schools).

More important than Douglass's technique is the example of Douglass's large spirit. Although he admits, "the lash of proscription ... has a sting for the soul," he seems psychically unscarred by those experiences. Speculating about the sources of his resilience and cheerfulness, Douglass notes the abiding presence of friends both white and black and a belief that "I had on my side all the invisible forces of the moral government of the universe." His conviction that race was transient—while humanity was permanent—insulated him. He rejected victimization: "'How do you feel,' said a friend to me, 'when you are hooted and jeered on the street on account of your

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color?' 'I feel as if an ass had kicked, but had hit nobody,' was my answer."

This was one of the prime lessons Booker T. Washington absorbed from Douglass: "In the face of discouragements and difficulties the Negro must ever remember that nobody can degrade him ... The individual himself is the only one who can inflict that punishment." In Washington's view, the deepest harm was done not by the oppressor to the oppressed but by the oppressor to himself; hence, Washington sincerely pitied racists. Witness the following passage from "Democracy and Education" (1896):

> The Negro can afford to be wronged; the white man cannot afford to wrong him. Unjust laws or customs that exist in many places regarding the races injure the white man and inconvenience the Negro. No race can wrong another race simply because it has the power to do so without being permanently injured in morals.... It is for the white man to save himself from his degradation that I plead.... Physical death comes to the one Negro lynched in a county, but death of the morals—death of the soul—comes to the thousands responsible for the lynching.

No materialist could fathom this statement. The creation of a "beloved community," about which Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke, entailed something of this same care for segregationists. King always stressed that the end of a boycott was reconciliation and redemption, not racial spoils or the extortion of color-coded jobs. King implied that materialists and atheists could not be true practitioners of nonviolent resistance, since the method required a belief that "the universe in some form is on the side of justice."

I suspect that the contemporary phenomenon of angry middle-class blacks derives in substantial part from the erosion of both Bible-based faith and faith in Progress. Charitable and hardy souls have been replaced by suspicious and fragile selves, hypersensitized to perceived slights and perpetually aggrieved. While Douglass was critical of the sort of Christianity that taught political quiescence to blacks (thereby underwriting white power), he possessed a strong sense of God's providential care. For Douglass, the existence of God was enough to "Keep Hope Alive." (Douglass would, I think, find Jesse Jackson's mantra to be misdirected, since hope is not self-willed but rather the gift of a higher wisdom to us.) Douglass never allowed his faith in better days ahead to preempt his labors in that direction. For him, divine providence and human responsibility went hand in hand. Accordingly, Douglass inveighed

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against the "emotional, shouting, and thoughtless religion" that instead of adding virtue to faith tended to "substitute faith for virtue," thereby becoming "a deadly enemy to our progress." Fellow abolitionist Martin Delany was even more insistent about the need for theological reform among African-Americans as a precondition for worldly success and happiness. Perhaps it is time once again to ask whether there is a connection between "a misconception of the character and ways of Deity" and bankrupt political strategies. One might start with a critique of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the Reverend Al Sharpton, and Minister Louis Farrakhan.

Douglass updated the third version of his autobiography once more in 1893, with an additional 100 pages, but otherwise the text was unaltered. Whereas the two early books had sold well (15,000 copies of *My Bondage and My Freedom* in the first two months), both the 1881 and 1893 editions sold poorly—perhaps a small sign of the nation's backsliding. By this time, the evidence of white degradation was all around: the disfranchisement of African-Americans, the virtual slavery of sharecropping and peonage, Jim Crow, "lynch law," and Supreme Court decisions that gutted federal enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (*Reese*, *Cruikshank*, the 1883 decisions declaring the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, and finally *Plessy* in 1896). Douglass continued till the end to act on the advice he is said to have given to a young man inquiring what he should do for his people: "agitate, agitate, agitate." Douglass's last truly great address, "Why is the Negro Lynched?," was published just a few months before his death from a sudden heart attack in February of 1895.

Bondage and freedom

One of the advantages of having all three autobiographies in one volume is the ease with which they can be compared. Naturally enough, the section on Douglass's life in freedom expands with the passage of time; in later editions, he does not extensively revisit this material, other than generally tightening his prose style in the 1881 version. However, there are interesting shifts—some marked, some subtle—in Douglass's presentation of his experience as a slave, particularly between the 1845 and 1854 versions.

Autobiography depends upon knowledge and memory. Douglass, however, is forced to write a narrative without a proper starting point, for he had no accurate knowledge of his

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age or his paternity, and very slight remembrance of his mother, having seen her only a handful of times. Slavery, he says, left him "without an intelligible beginning in the world." Ignorance of one's origin, deliberately enforced by masters, was the norm. "I do not," Douglass writes, "remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday." Although Douglass's father was assumed by many to have been his master, Aaron Anthony, and assumed by all, then and now, to have been a white man, Douglass could never verify these hunches: "Slavery does away with fathers, as it does away with families." Even his mother was taken from him, hired out as a field slave on a neighboring farm (an almost insurmountable 12 miles distant), while he was given over to the care of his grandmother. Douglass presents the separation of mothers from infants as another routine practice of slaveholders. The separation (and impairment of natural affection) brought on by "hiring out" could be quite as profound as that resulting from the actual sale of mother or child.

After the painful declarations of ignorance and absence that fill the opening pages, the first detailed memory that Douglass relates is of a whipping. The incident took place shortly after his transfer, at about age six, from his grandmother's isolated cabin to the slave quarters of Wye House, the home plantation of the Lloyd family. Douglass's master was the chief overseer for Col. Edward Lloyd V, three-time Maryland governor and U.S. Senator, whose vast empire included 21 farms, 10,000 acres, and 500 slaves. Aaron Anthony and his family, owners of 600 acres and 30 slaves of their own, lived in a small house on the Lloyd property. It was there that Douglass witnessed the beating of his aunt Hester.

Awakened by her screams at dawn, he found her stripped to the waist, her wrists bound and suspended from a ceiling hook. She stood upon a stool, her arms stretched up their full length, while "old master" whipped her mercilessly with the "blood-clotted cowskin": "The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest." Her crime was to have been caught in the company of a young man (Lloyd's Ned). Douglass tells us that his aunt was "a woman of noble form, and of graceful proportions," without equal among the local women, black or white. Whether young Frederick was aware of the sexual implications of what he was witnessing is unclear, but the mature Douglass makes the situation abundantly clear to his readers. Of Aaron Anthony's motives he says: "Had he been a man of pure morals himself,

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he might have been thought interested in protecting the innocence of my aunt; but those who knew him will not suspect him of any such virtue."

The opening chapter of the *Narrative* is thus entirely about slavery's perversion of domestic life. Douglass reminds us that the ownership of other human beings involves control over reproduction as well as production, sexuality as well as labor. As an institution, slavery was hostile to family formation and family-based identity among slaves. Along with documenting the effects of sexual despotism on slaves, Douglass observed the effects of the master's sexual license on his lawful family:

> The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves [mulatto children], out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so; for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back.

In the 1854 version, the material on Douglass's parentage and his initiation into the horrors of slavery remains, but does not appear until chapters three and five. Intervening are his earliest memories of life with his grandmother, Betsey, her longstanding partner Isaac Baily (a free man), and his numerous siblings and cousins (offspring of Betsey's daughters—Douglass referred to five, scholars now conclude nine). Living distant from the communal slave quarters, with adults who both worked on their own account, it is not so surprising that Douglass could say, "It was a long time before I knew myself to be *a slave*. I knew many other things before I knew that." Above all else, he knew freedom. Douglass's description of his early childhood is a Rousseauian idyll:

> The first seven or eight years of the slave-boy's life are about as full of sweet content as those of the most favored and petted *white* children of the slaveholder. The slave-boy escapes many troubles which befall and vex his white brother. He seldom has to listen to lectures on propriety of behavior, or on anything else.... Thus, freed from all restraint, the slave-boy can be, in his life and conduct, a genuine boy, doing whatever his boyish nature suggests;.... He literally runs wild; has no pretty little verses to learn in the nursery; no nice little speeches to make for aunts, uncles, or cousins, to show how smart he is;.... His days, when the weather is warm, are spent in the pure, open air, and in the bright sunshine. He always sleeps in airy apartments; he seldom has to take powders, to cleanse his blood, or to quicken his

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> appetite. He eats no candies; gets no lumps of loaf sugar; always relishes his food; cries but little, for nobody cares for his crying; learns to esteem his bruises but slight, because others so esteem them. In a word, he is, for the most part of the first eight years of his life, a spirited, joyous, uproarious, and happy boy.

Douglass perhaps generalizes his own carefree experience too readily, although he does acknowledge the damage that cold and hunger, if too severe, can do to youngsters. Even if latitude of action and exemption from artifice were quite typical, slave children otherwise situated would not have shared in his privilege of innocence. The terrible spectacles that Douglass eventually witnessed were part of their lives much sooner. Even Douglass had forebodings of what was to come. He had learned that his grandmother and all the children belonged to a mysterious and fearsome personage called Old Master and that each child in turn would be delivered up to him, never to see Grandmammy again. Douglass calls this new knowledge "something to brood over."

Father of the man

The pattern that emerges in these first chapters—relatively privileged circumstances alternating with sudden exposure to the full rigors of slavery—continues throughout Douglass's years in slavery. Whereas his first telling of his life, the *Narrative*, emphasized the most generic and brutal features of slavery, his second telling gives a better sense of the special interplay of character and circumstance that conspired to create Frederick Douglass. His earliest memory was not of his aunt being flogged, but his own enjoyment of freedom. Douglass claims that "the idea of being a freeman some day," which came to dominate his thoughts once he was well aware of his enslavement, was "an inborn dream of my human nature." I would not be the one to gainsay mankind's natural love of liberty, but Douglass's share of that love seems to have been greater than that of others, whether by natural endowment or fortuitous cultivation.

It is breathtaking how much the mature man can be glimpsed in the child, maybe especially in those destined for greatness. Winston Churchill's first memory (dating to age four) is similarly revealing:

> I remember my grandfather, the Viceroy, unveiling the Lord Gough statue in 1878. A great black crowd, scarlet soldiers on horseback, strings pulling away a brown shiny sheet, the old Duke, the formidable grandpapa, talking loudly to the crowd. I recall even a

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> phrase he used: "and with a withering volley he shattered the enemy's line."

The memory encapsulates Churchill's life: his love of martial victory, his sense of history (both familial and national) and its judgments, his capacity for rhetoric and poetic statesmanship. In Douglass, what predominated from the beginning were the twin loves of freedom and learning, accompanied by qualities—in particular, physical courage and humanity—that made those loves effectual, that translated them from interior to exterior.

After a cruel separation from his grandmother, Douglass spent two years at the Lloyd plantation. Being still too young for field work, he found his leisure filled with the many delightful sights and adventures offered by what was, in essence, a self-sustaining city. There were "barns, stables, storehouses, and tobacco-houses; blacksmiths' shops, wheelwrights' shops, coopers' shops ... kitchens, wash-houses, dairies, summer-houses, green-houses, hen-houses, turkey-houses, pigeon-houses, and arbors," plus the Great House itself. There were lawns, lanes, game parks, a creek with fish, crabs, clams, and oysters for the taking, and most wondrous of all to Douglass's curious mind, a windmill and a sailing sloop. Basing himself upon his joy in beholding "this elaborate exhibition of wealth, power, and vanity," Douglass makes the remarkable declaration, "these all belonged to me, as well as to Col. Edward Lloyd." Indeed, at one point, he goes even further, saying of the Great House that "they occupied it; *I* enjoyed it." Douglass's ownership extended beyond his free run of the place; the objects around him, both natural and man-made, were his because he was mindful of them, because he learned from them. It was not in him to feel dispossessed. I think Douglass eventually brought something of this same aptitude for appropriation and appreciation to the U.S. Constitution.

Douglass's stance toward the world contrasts sharply with that of Malcolm X, expressed in his famous speech "The Ballot or the Bullet." Malcolm X would have bluntly dismissed the slave-boy's sense of belonging:

> Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner.... Being born here in America doesn't make you an American.... No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism.

Unlike Douglass, for whom the world was his oyster, Malcolm

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X was a literalist—the world is not an oyster, only an oyster is an oyster and he wanted his. Douglass would not have gone so far as to say that freedom of the mind is absolute, or that in contemplating the prison walls one is free. He could not rest content with mindful observation, since much of what he observed outraged his sense of justice. But he did understand that a measure of real freedom was available to the bondsmen and, correlatively, that a measure of real slavery was the lot of the master. Having seen the loosed and odious passions that tyrannized the tyrants, Douglass felt no envy of their riches. He concluded: "The slave is a subject, subjected by others; the slaveholder is a subject, but he is the author of his own subjection. There is more truth in the saying, that slavery is a greater evil to the master than to the slave, than many, who utter it, suppose."

Education of the mind

Perhaps because of the young Douglass's leisure for exploration, he developed a very thorough knowledge of the workings of slavery on his own and neighboring plantations. Douglass notes that the seclusion of the Eastern Shore led to dark practices more typical of the Deep South than of the rest of Maryland. His precise accounts of the slaves' scanty provisioning and the barbarism of overseers are shocking. In Solzhenitsyn-like fashion, he documents cases of the unpunished murder of slaves. When the decision was made to transfer him to the more civilized precincts of Baltimore, he greeted the event "as a special interposition of Divine Providence," rescuing him from the dehumanization that would soon have been his lot. He found himself situated in a home new to slaveholding, where his task was to watch over the small son of a gentle and pious mistress. For the first time in his life, he was adequately fed, clothed, and sheltered (having been dressed only in a long coarsely woven shirt until then—that is to say, without a bed, shoes, socks, jacket, or trousers regardless of season).

What is probably the most well known story about Douglass dates from this time. When Douglass (about age nine) manifested an interest in the Bible-reading of his mistress, she undertook to instruct him; however, once the tutoring sessions became known to the husband, he forbade any further instruction, railing that

> learning would spoil the best nigger in the world ... it would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave ... if you learn him

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> how to read, he'll want to know how to write; and, this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself.

Douglass described this as "the first decidedly anti-slavery lecture" he had heard, for it sketched out "the direct pathway from slavery to freedom." It also revealed to him the source of the white man's power, which had been a nagging mystery. Douglass had already rejected the idea that black enslavement was in accord with God's plan or a result of disproportionate natural endowments. But if all men were by right free, what enabled one race to keep another in submission? Douglass now had his answer: a system of enforced ignorance.

On his own, Douglass completed the project of enlightenment his mistress had begun. The details of his ingenuity are charming (tricking neighboring white youngsters into sharing the secrets of writing and spelling; stealing copy-books; picking up castoff papers from the gutters), but what is most interesting is the energizing role played by hostility and prohibition. Douglass frankly acknowledges these negative inducements:

> The very determination which he expressed to keep me in ignorance, only rendered me the more resolute in seeking intelligence. In learning to read, therefore, I am not sure that I do not owe quite as much to the opposition of my master, as to the kindly assistance of my amiable mistress.

I wonder what impact this insight would have on pedagogical practices today? Again, one is reminded of Rousseau, who recommended placing the skill of reading tantalizingly just out of reach. Desire is the foundation for acquisition, but desire can't be assumed as a given. I am not suggesting that we make education more desirable by making it less available or by spreading the view that white devils are keeping it for themselves. I do, however, think we might discover ways both to awaken discontent over one's ignorance and to present education as the answer to that discontent. We could do with less focus on the self-esteem of students and the material resources at their disposal (for instance, the recently ballyhooed right to Internet access) and more straightforward talk about "the direct pathway" from dependency to freedom. Belief in the transformative power of knowledge must be restored. When that is present, the most meager of resources suffice. Douglass had a copy of the Bible and *The Columbian Orator* (a school text on the art of forensics, essentially an anthology of the rhetoric of

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liberty); Lincoln had the Bible, Shakespeare, and Euclid. Is it really better to catch youngsters up like flies in the world-wide cobweb? Maybe there is still something to be said for a few good books—a web of one's own selection through which one can move knowingly as the spider.

Education of the spirit

The master was right about the incompatibility of literacy and slavery. With knowledge, Douglass became increasingly sullen and seditious. His brooding was further aggravated when he found himself, after seven years in Baltimore, back on the Eastern Shore, subject once again to hunger and violently prevented from establishing a Sabbath school, where other slaves might learn to read the Gospel. His situation worsened again when he was farmed out for a stint with the noted "Negro-breaker" Edward Covey. Covey's reputation for returning the fieriest spirits *"well broken"* enabled him to get his land tilled at minimal cost, since desperate slaveholders were willing to charge low rates in exchange for "his happy management."

The lesson Douglass drew was not the one intended, however. He did learn that literacy alone is not enough. Literacy might "unfit" one for slavery, but it did not guarantee actual release. Douglass's favorite selection from *The Columbian Orator* was a dialogue between a master and a slave, in which the slave's articulate condemnation of slavery wins him his freedom. Life with Covey demonstrated that this vision of bringing about the end of slavery through rational dialogue was utopian. (Douglass had been encouraged as a youngster by the conversations he had had with white boys, many of whom shared his understanding of natural right and sympathized with his plight.) For the first time in his life, Douglass was regularly worked and lashed to the very limit of his endurance. Within a few months, Douglass says, he was "completely wrecked, changed and bewildered":

> I was broken in body, soul and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed; my intellect languished; the disposition to read departed; the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!

Covey's "mistake" was to push Douglass *beyond* what he could endure. With Douglass collapsed and ill from sunstroke,

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Covey demanded (with kicks and lashes) that he rise. Unable to do so, Douglass welcomed death. Although his noncompliance was a result of physical incapacity more than mental resolve, it had the effect of fortifying him for deliberate noncompliance. After a fruitless appeal to his master to rescue him from Covey's savagery, Douglass determined "to obey every order, however unreasonable, if it were possible, and, if Mr. Covey should then undertake to beat me, to defend and protect myself to the best of my ability." Douglass was recalled to himself not by a book, but by a beating. When Covey next sprang upon him, attempting to hog-tie and whip him, Douglass fought back, "strictly on the *defensive*," striking no blows of his own, but rather blocking and parrying. These self-adopted rules of engagement did not, however, prevent him from hurling Covey to the ground or squeezing him by the throat. Covey was unable to win the two-hour, hand-to-hand skirmish. For the remainder of his year with Covey—indeed for the remainder of his time in slavery—Douglass was never flogged again.

Years earlier, the observant child on the plantation had noticed that "he is whipped oftenest, who is whipped easiest; and that slave who has the courage to stand up for himself against the overseer, although he may have many hard stripes at the first, becomes, in the end, a freeman, even though he sustains the formal relation of a slave." While still a teenager, Douglass achieved this status for himself. The secret to what Douglass calls his "resurrection" was a willingness to die: "I had reached the point, at which I was *not afraid to die*. This spirit made me a freeman in *fact*, while I remained a slave in *form*." There is an important insight here into classical liberalism's trinity of rights ("life, liberty, and property"). They are not truly triune. During the period of his brutification, Douglass thought only of staying alive. As he admits, "in thinking of my life, I almost forgot my liberty." To put life above all else makes one slavish. In order to reclaim his humanity, Douglass had to think much less of staying alive. To secure liberty, he had to set life at hazard. In later years, Douglass never tired of citing his favorite lines of verse:

> Hereditary bondmen, know ye not
> Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?

The blow is struck against the master but also against one's own overmastering desires for preservation and comfort. Not

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that those desires are contemptible; as Douglass says, "life is not lightly regarded by men of sane minds." Nonetheless, there are situations in which liberty demands that life be ventured.

The battle with Covey enabled Douglass to set certain terms to his enslavement. Over the next four years, his ability to carve out a sphere of freedom for himself increased. When he was sent to work for Mr. Freeland (a truly decent master, whose goodness only quickened Douglass's longing to be his own master), he established a flourishing Sabbath school, with upwards of 40 scholars. And, with four compatriots, he plotted escape. When their attempt was foiled, Douglass was at considerable risk of being "sold South," but astonishingly, he was instead sent back to Baltimore to learn a skilled trade. There, he eventually negotiated the privilege of hiring his own time (a fairly common practice in Baltimore and New Orleans). He was to find and contract for caulking jobs on his own; pay for his own lodgings, clothing, and tools; and, in addition, turn over three dollars each week to his master.

> This arrangement, it will be perceived, was decidedly in my master's favor. It relieved him of all need of looking after me. His money was sure. He received all the benefits of slaveholding without its evils; while I endured all the evils of a slave, and suffered all the care and anxiety of a freeman. I found it a hard bargain. But, hard as it was, I thought it better than the old mode of getting along. It was a step towards freedom to be allowed to bear the responsibilities of a freeman.

Despite the onerous conditions, Douglass saved money, mingled with free blacks at the "East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society," and within four years of the battle with Covey, Douglass shook off the lingering form of slavery with a daring flight north.

Douglass today

Douglass's long journey toward full freedom is a vivid reminder that freedom cannot, properly speaking, be granted; it must be wrested and won. We tend today to talk much of opportunity—equalizing it, providing it, extending it. But perhaps opportunity is like freedom, not a thing to be given but rather a self-made thing, created out of imagination and keenness. What constitutes an opportunity? Douglass was forbidden to read; that ban became a spur to a remarkable and lifelong process of self-education. Douglass was savagely beaten; that mistreatment roused him to an act of courage that be-

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came the first of many acts of self-emancipation. Were these opportunities? It would seem perverse to say so. Perhaps "opportunity" is just not a very apposite term. Etymology reveals that it means "toward harbor." Opportunity is too safety-conscious a conception, too untrue to the curious twists and turns of life. It might be better to retrieve two terms that have fallen out of fashion: providence and character. Of providence, Douglass says:

> The allotments of Providence, when coupled with trouble and anxiety, often conceal from finite vision the wisdom and goodness in which they are sent; and, frequently, what seemed a harsh and invidious dispensation is converted by after experience into a happy and beneficial arrangement.

On "character," Douglass is even more eloquent:

> What we, the colored people, want, is *character* ... A change in our political condition would do very little for us without this. Character is the important thing, and without it we must continue to be marked for degradation and stamped with the brand of inferiority.... Industry, sobriety, honesty, combined with intelligence and a due self-respect, find them where you will, among black or white, must be *looked up to*—can never be *looked down upon*. In their presence, prejudice is abashed, confused and mortified.... The offensive traits of character imputed to us, can only be injurious while they are true of us. For a man to say that sweet is bitter—that right is wrong—that light is darkness—is not to injure the truth, but to stamp himself a liar; and the like is true when they impute to us that of which we are not guilty. We have the power of making our enemies slanderers, and this we must do by showing ourselves worthy and respectable men.
>
> We are not insensible to the various obstacles that throng the colored man's pathway to respectability....
>
> The fact that we are limited and circumscribed, ought rather to incite us to a more vigorous and persevering use of the elevating means within our reach, than to dishearten us. The means of education, though not so free and open to us as to white persons, are nevertheless at our command to such an extent as to make education possible.

Douglass was as willing to speak forthrightly about the shortcomings of his own people as to castigate the evildoers among the white population. Such criticism is rarely welcome, but done as Douglass does it, truth-telling can be bracing. By contrast, in our attempts to avoid "blaming the victim," we often end up stripping individuals of all responsibility and agency over their lives. Already in 1889, before sociology made matters even worse, Douglass worried about the loss of self-

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knowledge brought on by always blaming others: "We have been so long in the habit of tracing our failures and misfortunes to the views and acts of others that we seem, in some measure, to have lost the talent and disposition of seeing our own faults."

While Douglass demanded strong federal enforcement of civil rights, he was wary of aid, whether governmental or private, that enfeebled the recipients. He recognized the do-gooders' temptation to paternalism and urged solicitous whites to pursue the sterner course of justice:

> I think the American people are disposed often to be generous rather than just. I look over this country at the present time, and I see Educational Societies, Sanitary Commissions, Freedmen's Associations, and the like, —all very good: but in regard to the colored people there is always more that is benevolent, I perceive, than just, manifested towards us. What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply *justice*. The American people have always been anxious to know what they shall do with us.... I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us! If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are wormeaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! I am not for tying or fastening them on the tree in any way, except by nature's plan, and if they will not stay there, let them fall. And if the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone!

How insulted Douglass would have been by policies like affirmative action and minority set-asides.

The request to be let alone did not signal an acceptance of segregation, either voluntary or enforced, on Douglass's part. Quite the reverse. Douglass meant that blacks should be able and willing to circulate freely—attending schools, gaining employment, buying homes, using public transport and accommodations, all without reference to color. Since it has become axiomatic today that color-blindness is impossible, we rely instead on mandated color-matching (every so many of these must be diversified by a few of those). Again, Douglass would have been saddened by the degree to which Americans are selling themselves short. Douglass had faith in the capacity of whites and blacks alike to defeat prejudice, thereby becoming indifferent to the difference of color. Complexional institutions—black churches, schools, benevolent and literary societies—were, for Douglass, temporary expedients only. He advised his breth-

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ren "to occupy memberships and stations among white persons, and in white institutions, just so fast as our rights are secured to us." Douglass's vision of the American future was integrationist to such an extent that he regarded the amalgamation of the races as inevitable, eventually. We are still an awfully long way from a fully blended nationality, but interracial unions are increasing in number and certainly no longer cause the sort of stir that greeted the widower Douglass's own marriage, late in life, to a white woman.

American race pride

Finally, Douglass warned against promoting "race pride." Since color is the "gift of the Almighty," Douglass argued that it is not a legitimate source of either pride or shame. Pride should follow upon achievement. Moreover, for blacks, race pride was not only false but dangerous as well. Douglass explains why in an 1889 speech entitled "The Nation's Problem":

> What is the mountain devil, the lion in the way of our progress? What is it, but American race pride; an assumption of superiority upon the ground of race and color? Do we not know that every argument we make, and every pretension we set up in favor of race pride is giving the enemy a stick to break our own heads?
>
> But it may be said that we shall put down race pride in the white people by cultivating race pride among ourselves. The answer to this is that the devils are not cast out by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The poorest and meanest white man, drunk or sober, when he has nothing else to commend him, says: "I am a white man, I am." We can all see the low extremity reached by that sort of race pride, and yet we encourage it when we pride ourselves upon the fact of our color.

The mountain lion is still in our midst, awakened by the disintegration of the struggle for civil rights into the movement for Black Power. In an era when black is thought to spell entitlement, an unapologetic, indeed truculent, reassertion of white power (or at least white anger) by those unversed in history was entirely predictable. One way to send the mountain devils of race-power back to their respective lairs is to press into service those trusty weapons of American idealism and constitutionalism. Douglass summoned blacks and whites to "enjoy together, in the same country, under the same flag, the inestimable blessings of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as neighborly citizens of a common country." I know we have grown more cynical, but I can't believe that

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national pride coupled with appeals to principle will not trump race pride (black or white). Ideals and symbols still matter intensely.

In June of 1863, on the eve of the Battle of Gettysburg, Douglass could look forward to living together "under the same flag," the flag of Union with its promise of liberty and justice for all. It is a national disgrace that, in the year 2000, the flag of the treasonous Confederacy still flies on the State House grounds of South Carolina and Georgia, in defiance of the deaths of half a million soldiers—sacrificed in partial payment of the blood drawn by 250 years of slavery. If we were to listen again to Frederick Douglass, perhaps we could learn how to ransom the future from the sins of the past. The first step would be to recover the hope that it might be done, and to insist that we live under and by the same standards, which is to say the same flag and the same laws.

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Love among the ruins

KAY S. HYMOWITZ

JUST when you thought American culture couldn't sink any lower, along comes Fox TV's "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?" During the two-hour show this past February, 50 young women vied in a beauty contest, which included a swimsuit parade, to marry Rick Rockwell, a California real estate developer, motivational speaker, and aspiring comic. Rockwell picked from the pageant of lovelies an emergency-room nurse named Darva Conger, went down on his knee, and when she accepted, married her. (Since this was Las Vegas, the producers were able to have a license made out in the five-minute commercial break between the proposal and ceremony).

Though the show was an immediate success—twenty-two million Americans tuned in—the aftermath was a disaster. Apparently unmoved by the ceremonial kiss, the bride wept through the entire airplane trip to her Caribbean honeymoon as her beloved snored away in the next seat. It was just a matter of days before it emerged that Rockwell was not just a dolt but a brute—his previous girlfriend had had to take out a restraining order against him—and a fraud. He was not Rick Rockwell from Los Angeles (surprise!); he was Richard Balkey from Pittsburgh. Moreover, he wasn't a millionaire but a mortgaged-to-the-hilt, Mametesque schemer. Inevitably, Conger filed for an annulment. And in a fitting coda several weeks later, Jay Thomas, the host of the show, revealed that his own marriage had ended with even greater speed after he and his wife of one hour began squabbling in the car on the way back from the church. Meanwhile, rising from the ashes, the abandoned Rockwell took his comic act on the road for a "National Annulment Tour."

The spectacle of 50 women making fools of themselves at the prospect of marrying a rich man elicited a good deal of commentary, mostly from feminists, who shook their heads in disgust, and evolutionary psychologists, who said I told you so.

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Yet the carnival atmosphere should not prevent us from grasping what the whole episode reveals about the ambiguous health of marriage in America today. While the poor thing is mocked and paraded through the airways in circus tights, marriage nevertheless remains among life's most valued goals. Those millions of women viewers—can anyone doubt that almost all *were* women?—did not just watch in order to sneer. They wanted to see a wedding, and they wanted to believe, despite all odds, it could lead to happiness. That they hoped to see this all happen on a game show may make them seem foolish, but the truth is today no one has a clue about how to seek a happy marriage anyway.

The predicament of young women nearing marriageable age on our college campuses hints at the depth of the problem. Some weeks after Conger and Rockwell tied the knot, the *New York Times* ran a story on Wesleyan University's "naked dorm" where, as one 19-year-old male student told the reporter: "If I feel the need to take my pants off, I take my pants off," something he evidently felt the need to do during the interview. A less persuaded female student recounted her worried phone call to her parents when she first realized that she had been assigned to a "naked dorm." In a gesture that sums up about all we need to know about the prospects for serious emotional bonds among young people today, her father "laughed."

INTO this blasted cultural landscape strides University of Chicago professors Amy and Leon Kass with a splendid anthology, *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying.*† (The title comes from a poem Robert Frost wrote on the occasion of his daughter's wedding.) The book may require an elder Virgil to explain its mysteries, but it is aimed at today's dazed and confused young. Its purpose is to help them explore the "meaning, purpose, and virtues of marriage and especially, about how one might go about finding and winning the right one to marry." The volume spans centuries of Western texts from Homer to Aquinas to C.S. Lewis and includes writings from philosophy, theology, history, literature, and anthropology. Yet despite a premise that may seem quaint and its sometimes hoary sources, *Wing to Wing* does not come off as a cabinet of curiosities. It is a stirring anthology of human aspiration—aspirations that the Kasses con-

† University of Notre Dame Press. 636 pp. $25.00.

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tend are still beating, however faintly, and however challenged by Fox TV and naked dorms, in the hearts of young people.

Divided into seven sections—with headings like, "Is This Love?," "Why Marry?," and "How Can I Find and Win the Right One?"—*Wing to Wing* sets out to tour a different world than that inhabited by such celebrity gender theorists as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Yet the plainness of its language is far from pandering; it is designed to help the gender- and MTV-hardened reader recall what were once mundane, though profound, truths. Throughout the anthology the reader is reminded how love and marriage answer fundamental human needs, helping to assuage our inevitable loneliness and feelings of incompleteness. "It is not good that man should be alone," God says as he fashions Eve from Adam's rib in one of several selections from Genesis. In Aristophanes' famous speech from Plato's *Symposium* about the origins of erotic longing, it is Eros "who tries to make one out of two and to heal their human nature," for each of us is a mere "token of a human being."

Love and marriage also pay homage to the relentless cycle of life. By announcing the couple's readiness to procreate, marriage simultaneously accepts and resists death, for by giving birth, the couple both acknowledges that they will be replaced and insists that they will endure. Moreover, as C.S. Lewis explains in an elegant selection from his 1960 book *The Four Loves*, because of its universal historical and sacramental character, marriage teaches us that "forces older and less personal than we work through us." Thus the theologian William May in a paper entitled "Four Mischievous Theories About Sex" alludes to Hugh Hefner's one-time policy of never allowing a story about death in *Playboy*, for as the name suggests, the playboy is a child oblivious to the passage of time and his own insignificance.

Wing to Wing is an unabashedly and plain-speaking pro-marriage anthology; don't come here looking for Flaubert or Ibsen. But it is not naive. The editors are well aware that many powerful forces, including feminism, reproductive technologies, and the sexual revolution, have rendered obsolete easy prescriptions for "how to find the right one." And they believe that more than a behavioral script has been lost to these forces. Traditional forms of courtship did not merely prescribe "the rules"; they contained within them a tacit understanding of the nature of love, human sexuality, the individual's place within the social order, and the larger pur-

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poses of human life. In setting before the young some of the greatest works on these subjects, Leon and Amy Kass do not hope so much to provide answers to these questions—about which many of their own authors would in any event disagree—as to instill some consciousness of the alternatives to our present benighted predicament. Most young people today receive no guidance in the "momentous undertaking" that is courtship. "I don't think I ever made a decision; I just sort of did it," said Darva Conger, and though her situation was extraordinary, her sentiments are probably not. At the very least, *Wing to Wing* is meant to wake the Darva Congers of this world from their sleepwalking.

THE conflict between the fleeting nature of romantic passion and the permanence of marriage is one of the large recurring problems the Kasses want their readers to wake up to and ponder. Some of the thinkers selected, such as Erasmus, Ben Franklin, and the contemporary theologian Gilbert Meilaender, seem to get around the problem by valuing marriage not for its promise of romantic bliss but for its potential for companionship and friendship. Of course, through much of history, people solved the problem by drawing a firm line between eros and marriage. No self-respecting Greek, with the possible exception of Homer, whose Odysseus and Penelope appear here as an example of domestic love, ever imagined that marriage was anything more than an economic and social arrangement. In the Middle Ages, though romantic passion became a mark of gentility, it was strictly extramarital. Using the legend of Tristan and Iseult as his starting point, the Swiss philosopher Denis De Rougemont argues that in fact passion thrives only when lovers are prevented from satisfying their feelings; marriage, which removes obstruction, is the "negation of passion." "Just think of Mme Tristan!" he scoffs. (Could Homer be pertinent here as well? Decades of wandering may well have been the obstruction that fueled Odysseus' passion for Mme. Odysseus.) It was only in the late eighteenth century with the rise of the novel, the concept of individualism, and the right to emotional happiness, according to the historian Lawrence Stone, that people in the West begin to imagine that romantic love should be the basis of marriage.

The Kasses openly admit to being partisans of this latter tradition, as are doubtless their intended readers, and much of *Wing to Wing* is really an attempt to address its central challenge: What can we do to ensure that love, whom we all know

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to be blind, guides us into a strong marriage? How do we know that the one we love is the one we should marry? For the editors, this is the purpose of modern courtship. And given the fickleness of passion and youth, they view courtship's greatest challenge not as finding love but as disciplining raw passion, youthful impetuousness, and immature egotism. They illustrate the difference between the head-over-heels cravings of Romeo and Juliet and the mindful restraint of *As You Like It*'s Rosalind as she coaches the impulsive Orlando toward mature passion. Rosalind aches with feeling—"O coz, coz, coz," she swoons to her dear friend Celia, "that thou / didst know how many fathom deep I am in love! But / it cannot be sounded"—yet she will be neither overthrown by love's crude power nor its sonnet artifices. In testing a lover's suitability and worth through courtship, a young woman—the authors argue that given men's more impulsive sexual nature, it is women who must hold the reigns—may also come to self-awareness. Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennett, for example, tames Mr. Darcy's pride and prejudice at the same time that she comes to understand her own. This self-knowledge is not merely a narcissistic adventure in therapy; it humbles her and thereby enlarges her own capacity for self-giving.

MOST of the passages in *Wing to Wing* balance the lyricism of human longing and the substance of reason and philosophical thought in this fashion. The few selections that fail may tell us something about the complexity of our romantic predicament today. In a formulaic short story called "The Word Love," by Chita Banerjee Divakaruni, an unhappy young Indian woman finally leaves her callous lover when she realizes her need to hew to her mother and the tradition of premarital chastity she represents. A passage from a novel by Pearl Abraham, which tells the story of a rebellious young Orthodox Jewish woman who finally and happily conforms to her parents' choice for a marriage partner, is similarly programmatic. Both of these contemporary works evade a serious encounter with the conundrum of our liberal individualism, an individualism that, while heightening our expectations for erotic and romantic happiness, corrodes our capacity for long-lived marriage. Their easy commitment to traditional forms of courtship makes them subject to the charge of quaintness and irrelevance, which the editors otherwise so successfully avoid.

More compelling are other modern writers who attempt to speak to the fierce struggle between our modern autonomy

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and our archetypal longings. In a fascinating selection from his letters, Rilke proposes, in ways reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence (noticeably absent from *Wing to Wing*), that rather than lovers giving themselves up in momentary passion to one another, "Each should stand guard over the solitude of the other." It may be more provocative than satisfying, but it embraces the truth that even young people today know too well: "Love is something difficult."

AMY and Leon Kass do not fool themselves that they can deliver a new language and narrative for attaining this "something difficult." But what they do accomplish is still something wonderful. *Wing to Wing* cannot help but awaken a salutary awareness of our often contradictory desires. Most of all, it opens up vistas of human potential for our malnourished youth, stunted by years of gender theory, Fox TV, and parents who laugh at naked dorms. Read Kierkegaard's reflections on marriage: "Marriage in many ways is really a venture in natural magic." It transforms ordinary life "by a miracle into something significant for the believer." Or study Edwin Muir's ecstatic "Annunciation": "Now in this iron reign / I sing the liberty / Where each asks from each / What each most wants to give / And each awakes in each / What else would never be." Try laughing at that.

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The journal that saved the city

IRWIN M. STELZER

CITIES are humanity's hothouses, where human potential develops to its fullest pitch of excellence and variety." So says Myron Magnet, editor of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, a magazine that gets more policy bang per philanthropic buck than any of its think-tank publication cousins. And now Magnet has collected the magazine's best in a single volume, *The Millennial City: A New Urban Paradigm for 21st-Century America*.†

Magnet contends that "the new urban paradigm" has four principal elements: a new approach to crime, the reform of welfare, the shrinking of bloated government, and education reform. The book contains a series of articles on these subjects, with others devoted to homelessness, the quality of life, immigrants, the physical city, and the economy. It's no exaggeration to say that this new paradigm rescued many American cities from what might have been an irreversible descent into chaos.

To read, or in this reviewer's case, to reread the 35 articles reproduced here is to be reminded of why the *City Journal* has become the bible of New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose annual "State of the City Speeches" so closely follow *City Journal* articles that Magnet could easily win a plagiarism suit. In addition, Magnet's magazine has guided such reform-minded mayors as Los Angeles's Richard Riordan, who replaced his predecessor Tom Bradley's "grandiose centralized visions" with programs to lighten the tax and regulatory burdens on small business, and Indianapolis mayor Stephen Goldsmith, who realized early in his term that privatization could put a competitive spur to the city's work force and improve the quality of city services while reducing their cost. Magnet and his magazine's reputation have even reached London, where a leading newspaper recently devoted a full page to Magnet's

† Ivan R. Dee. 424 pp. $27.50.

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views on how London's new left-wing mayor might avoid destroying the British capital with the soft-on-crime, strong-on-welfare policies of pre-Giuliani New York.

The *City Journal*'s series of articles on education policy, many of them by Sol Stern, are among its best. Stern exposes the teachers' unions for caring only about themselves, the students be damned. He also describes the achievements of the fund-starved Catholic schools and makes the case for vouchers as the way to improve primary and secondary education. Also in this series, Kay Hymowitz reveals the so-called "special education" programs to be wasteful and destructive—a source of funds for parents best able to game the funding system by finagling eligibility status for their children ("special" needs or no).

THIS latter article demonstrates one of *City Journal*'s great strengths. Although he has a taste for fine-tuned think pieces, such as Roger Scruton's "Why Lampposts and Phone Booths Matter," Magnet clearly prefers hard-nosed factual reporting by writers willing to go into the classrooms, dig through detailed budget reports, and immerse themselves in the smells, sounds, and sights of New York.

Consider Steven Craig and D. Andrew Austin's "New York's Million Missing Jobs," which meticulously compares the expenditures of New York with other cities—no easy chore, given the opaque and noncomparable nature of the financial reporting schemes of America's cities. The authors demonstrate that the overmanning of the public sector and the associated job-killing tax burden cannot be explained by any special characteristic of New York City. After comparing the relevant characteristics and budgets of New York with those of 18 other cities, Craig and Austin conclude that "New York isn't different enough from other cities to require its unique spending level." All this in an article that is both data-laden and highly readable.

And there is E. Fuller Torrey's article ("Let's Stop Being Nutty About the Mentally Ill") recommending a new approach to treatment of the mentally unstable—but only after Torrey visits the Keener Men's Shelter on Ward's Island; and Kay Hymowitz ("The Teen Mommy Track") deploring programs that treat unwed teen pregnancy as an alternative life style—but only after taking the trouble to interview 30 new or expectant young mothers, their boyfriends, nurses, teachers, and social workers. And then there is the wonderful Heather

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Mac Donald ("Why Johnny's Teacher Can't Teach"), who describes the deplorable irrelevance and plain silliness of what is taught in the nation's teacher education schools—but only after attending some eye-opening lectures at the City College of New York.

But it would be unfair to leave the impression that *City Journal* articles are so detailed and case-specific that they lack a set of informing principles. The publication reflects Magnet's underlying philosophy: a belief in competition because it provides efficiency and choice; a healthy suspicion of the municipal welfare state for turning citizens into demoralized victims and dependents; and the understanding that no one is "'entitled' to the unconditional support of his or her neighbors."

THE *City Journal* is important not only because it has played a key role in the urban renaissance of recent years. It is important, too, for the lessons it provides other think tanks. These institutions, some of them based in Washington and focused on one aspect or another of national domestic and foreign policy, others concentrating on regional affairs or, as with the Manhattan Institute, on policy at the state and local level, are rapidly replacing our universities as homes for scholars who seek to escape the stultifying politically correct atmosphere of campus life. In the case of the Manhattan Institute, we have it to thank not only for the *City Journal* but for supporting the research of such leading scholars as Charles Murray, whose *Losing Ground* has gone from a shockingly radical prescription for welfare reform to mainstream public policy in a few short years.

What the *City Journal* teaches—or should teach—is that a well-edited, attractive, and relevant journal is the key to effective delivery of the ideas that are born in the conference rooms, libraries, lunch rooms, and offices of the tanks to which independent scholars now come to think. And it is the editor of that journal we have to thank for this lesson.

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How are we doing?

JASON BERTSCH

WRITERS often overestimate themselves and their projects, which they consider more important, urgent, and original than they really are. Marc and Marque-Luisa Miringoff, the authors of *The Social Health of the Nation: How America is Really Doing*,† are a case in point. The book is the culmination of more than a decade of research, and backed by the weight of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations and the work of over two dozen scholars. Thus the Miringoffs begin their book on a grand note: "Although much social data exists on many important aspects of daily life, it is usually not made available in a form that is accessible to the public, to the makers of policy, or to the media." But this is simply not true.

In fact, one of the most interesting developments in mainstream journalism in the last decade is how much intelligent and nuanced reporting there is on social issues. It is now difficult to read the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, or *U.S. News & World Report* without coming across a useful article on a major social issue. Frequently, the articles are full of statistical data, charts, tables, and historical comparisons. Leading newspapers and magazines have hired reporters who concentrate on issues like crime, health care, poverty, education, religion, family, and children. These reporters generally do very good work and are much better at what they do than the editorial writers.

A number of books have also been published on the nation's social health. William Bennett published his *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* in 1994 and released an updated version in 1999. Urie Bronfenbrenner and several of his Cornell colleagues published a widely reviewed statistical survey of the country, *The State of Americans*, in 1996. Every year, the *World Almanac* includes all kinds of information on important

† Oxford University Press. 245 pp. $25.00.

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social subjects broken down not only by country but, in some cases, state-by-state. Less well-known, but extremely useful, is the *Statistical Abstract*, an annual compendium of data from many government agencies, which is published by the Census Bureau. All this is worth mentioning because the authors of *The Social Health of the Nation* devote half their book to complaining about the dearth of accessible social data.

THE other half of the book, which aims to paint "a portion of the social side of the nation's official portrait," is somewhat more useful. It examines 16 different subjects and is organized into three chapters: "Indicators of Improving Performance," "Indicators of Worsening Performance," and "Indicators of Shifting Performance." On all but three of the 16 subjects, the authors gathered data that run from 1970 to 1996.

The four indicators that "represent important national achievements in social health" include infant mortality, high-school dropouts, poverty among the elderly, and life expectancy. The infant mortality rate is now at its lowest point in American history at seven deaths per 1,000 live births, a drop of 64 percent since 1970. (Interesting note: The authors write that, in spite of this progress, low birthweights have increased significantly during the 1990s. In 1996, 7 percent of all births in America were below full weight, which was the highest level recorded since 1975.)

More good news, according to the authors, can be found in the education system. Although the United States ranks behind most other industrialized nations in its high-school graduation rates—and in its performance on math, science, and physics evaluations—the percentage of American students aged 18 to 24 who dropped out of school declined from 17 percent in 1970 to 13 percent in 1996. A more significant improvement occurred in higher education: In 1970, 16 percent of the population aged 25 to 29 completed four or more years of college; in 1996, 27 percent did. Unfortunately, the Miringoffs do not dig deeper on educational issues. If students are learning less and less each year, which many studies suggest, it matters less that fewer students are leaving school prematurely.

Two social areas filled with unambiguous good news are old-aged poverty and life expectancy. The poverty rate for Americans aged 65 and over has declined from 25 percent in 1970 to 11 percent in 1996. This is a remarkable 56 percent

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decline and a feather in the cap of the Social Security program. The data provided by the Miringoffs on life expectancy is stale but, nevertheless, interesting. Americans of both sexes—and of all ethnic and racial groups—are living substantially longer than they did in 1970 when average life expectancy was 71 years (today, it is a little over 76 years). Even more interesting is that the poorest, least educated, most under-insured ethnic group of Americans (black females) live slightly longer on average than our wealthiest and allegedly most privileged group (white males).

EMPIRICALLY, the weakest part of the book is the bad news chapter. The authors say that the areas where things have gotten noticeably worse are child abuse, violent crime, youth suicide, health-care coverage, wages, income inequality, and child poverty. On the first three—child abuse, violent crime, and youth suicide—things have indeed worsened: Child abuse peaked in 1996 when more than three million children nationwide were reported abused. Adult and juvenile crime rates have nearly doubled since 1970. Teenage suicides have increased by 36 percent since 1970 and, according to the authors, 150 percent since 1950. These trends are significant and disturbing—a nation where large numbers of children are being abused, where violent criminals frequently roam the streets, and where most teenagers personally know someone who has committed suicide cannot be very healthy.

But the authors muddle the picture when they survey the other bad-news subjects—health-care coverage, wages, income inequality, and child poverty. The Miringoffs say that health-care coverage has dropped since 1970—but do not mention that most Americans, including the uninsured poor, are still receiving more and better health care than ever before. They say wages have "either declined or stagnated" during the last 30 years—but fail to mention that spending power has shot up dramatically for almost all Americans since 1970. They show that income inequality has increased over time and explain that there is a widening gap between rich and poor—but, among other things, ignore the possibility of upward mobility in America.

Finally, the Miringoffs neglect crucial data when they repeat what has become a mantra among social scientists and politicians: that child poverty has seriously worsened since 1970 and that "high rates of child poverty constitute what should be a significant indicator, or a warning sign, that the

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strength and stability of the American future is at risk." As a few prominent and courageous social scientists have noted, America's poor children, even the very poorest among them, now have more goods, more food, more teachers, more counselors, and better housing than at any other point in history. The reality is that in the 1990s, the biggest health problem for most poor American children is not malnourishment but obesity.

WHEN it comes to bad news in America—particularly that relating to children—the Miringoffs look in all the wrong places. The book never explores the most significant and consequential social fact of the last 100 years: the decline and continuing deterioration of the traditional, two-parent American family. None of the 16 indicators surveyed by the Miringoffs looks at the subject. Single-parent families, teenage illegitimacy, out-of-wedlock births, cohabitation, and divorce rates are topics completely overlooked by *The Social Health of the Nation*. For any book that claims to provide a picture of America, this oversight is inexcusable.

Consider just a few facts the authors did not include. Between 1970 and 1998, the percentage of teenage mothers who are unmarried went from 30 percent to 79 percent. During the same time, the overall percentage of births that are out of wedlock increased from 11 percent to 33 percent. Among blacks, it has shot up from 38 percent to 69 percent. And even though fewer people are getting married today than in 1970, more couples are getting divorced. A generation ago, the odds that a child's parents would divorce were one in four; in 1999, the odds were one in two. Kids may be worse off now than they were in 1970, but it is not primarily for a lack of material sustenance.

Why are the authors silent on these seismic, unprecedented shifts? How can they expect to provide, to use their words, "a deeper view of the everyday conditions that affect the daily lives" of Americans without addressing the most immediate condition of daily life, the family?

There is, I think, one compelling explanation. The Miringoffs do not consider the family a social indicator in its own right. Near the end of the book, the authors discuss their ambitions to expand *The Social Health of the Nation* and create a National Social Survey. The national survey, they write, would include "indicators that monitor the satisfactions of work, the extent of economic security or insecurity that work now en-

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genders, the effect of work on family life, and the degree to which jobs provide a sense of contributing to community and to society." So rather than exploring how splintering families affect children, their parents, and their communities, the authors will in the future concentrate on how changing work patterns might affect families. Their emphasis is on the economy, not family life itself, which they strangely ignore.

ABOUT halfway through *The Social Health of the Nation*, the authors ask the reader to think about what happens when the U.S. economy goes into recession—when, say, the stock market falls several hundred points or interest rates rise one or two percentage points. Their answer: Citizens get grumpy, government gets criticized, and politicians (especially the president) become unpopular. And this is why, if things continue to go badly, a huge effort by all sorts of people is made to turn things around and get the economy running smoothly again.

But then the Miringoffs pose a different set of questions. What happens when our social life goes into recession? What happens when, say, teenage suicide rates go up, when child abuse becomes more common, or when illegal drug use proliferates? Do citizens demand answers then? Why not? The Miringoffs should be commended for raising these questions. But the most pressing question—what happens to American society when the institution of the family is severely weakened?—goes not only unanswered but unasked.

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Philosophizing public opinion

JEREMY RABKIN

SLAVKO Splichal is a "professor of mass communications and public opinion" at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. He tells us in the Preface to his *Public Opinion: Developments and Controversies in the Twentieth Century*† that he "started to write this book bilingually, in Slovene and English." When this approach proved "too demanding," however, he "wrote more than half of the original version partly in Slovene and partly in English." Perhaps it is easier to follow the works he has written entirely in English.

I doubt it though. This is a seriously flawed book, burdened by clumsy writing and lacking a clear thesis. But it's not without its virtues. For the patient reader, Splichal offers the reminder that "public opinion" is a confusing phenomenon and the sources of this confusion were better understood before we developed so many techniques to "measure" it.

In fact, Splichal's book has a certain charm, which, as much as its clumsiness and pedantry, seems to reflect its bicultural origins. Splichal displays great respect for the classics of European social thought, but he has spent time, more recently, at American universities and worked his way through a sizable body of literature by American social scientists. *Public Opinion* tries to knit together these different sources of inspiration. Splichal seems eager to prove that American-style, quantitative, empirical work has a lot to offer Europeans, while still trying to save room for an older tradition of European analysis. In Splichal's hands, these encounters between the two academic traditions, while rarely satisfying, are nonetheless intriguing.

In the opening chapters, Splichal reminds us that debates about the status of public opinion long preceded the advent of polling. Hegel insisted that the idea of public opinion was

† Rowman & Littlefield. 392 pp. $27.95.

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inherently contradictory, since "public" suggests something authoritative while "opinion" suggests something personal, even idiosyncratic. Accordingly, Hegel looked to a careful arrangement of constitutional organs to articulate concerns of "the public." Splichal notes that Hegel's point works better in German where the word for "opinion"—*meinung*—already echoes with the sweaty clutch of what's *mein*. But even in English, I think, "opinion" carries a hint of the optional or the opportune, the casual or impulsive. By contrast, what is "public"—as in public record or public authority—suggests something formally established, something that can be confidently displayed to everyone.

European thinkers worried a great deal about what should count as public opinion and whose opinion should be identified with "the public." In the early twentieth century, as Splichal recounts, the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies insisted that only reasonable and considered views should be included in "public opinion." To encourage the formation of such views, he advocated generous subventions to newspapers, to free them of pressures from commercial advertisers and from political party patronage.

The proposal will strike most contemporary Americans as bizarre. But perhaps it should not. After all, contemporary American liberals claim that we need campaign finance reform to limit the influence of special interests on elections. Tönnies, with a Teutonic compulsion to systematize, simply followed out this logic for the whole climate of "public opinion." As it is, though we say that law should express the will of the people, we empower courts to strike down laws that judges regard as "arbitrary." Prominent law professors assure us that what is entirely arbitrary cannot be identified with "the public"—that only the considered, defensible views of a wider consensus can be acknowledged as having the authority of "law." By similar logic, we might say that in the climate of opinion which guides or inspires legislators, only the reasonable should be identified with the public. This approach might even be more democratic (as Tönnies believed) than the Hegelian view that actual mass opinion should simply be ignored.

BY the time techniques for mass polling of opinion became available, however—and characteristically, they were pioneered in the United States, during the 1930s—the practitioners of these techniques no longer cared about such theoreti-

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cal disputes. They were content, according to Splichal, to identify "public opinion" with the opinions of numerical majorities in random samples. The technique did work well enough in predicting voter behavior, in the literal sense that polls could usually predict who would win an upcoming election.

But the ambiguity or sloppiness of survey research is suggested by the very word "polls"—which used to mean an actual election ballot and was then applied, initially as a mere metaphor, to contests between preferences in "opinion." What do these second polls imply for the authority of the original ones? Dilemmas about public opinion are directly related to dilemmas about democracy.

Is it bad for democracy that today's politicians rely so much on opinion polls? Splichal considers a number of arguments that it is. The American political scientist Benjamin Ginsberg has argued, for example, that polls tend to limit the influence of protest movements by giving equal weight to the inattentive and indifferent bystander as to the committed activist. Perhaps this is so, but it might not be a bad thing for democracy if opinion polling depresses or dilutes the influence of angry militants. In the wake of furious protests over police brutality in New York City, for example, it might have been reassuring to many politicians to hear about a poll reporting that 75 percent of African Americans and 83 percent of Latinos in New York say they "respect the police."

SPLICHAL also takes up Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's argument that measured public opinion reflects something other than opinions on the issues themselves. Noelle-Neumann started her career as a young assistant to Nazi Propaganda chief Josef Goebbels and later became a prominent analyst of public opinion in West Germany. In the 1970s, she published a series of articles on "the spiral of silence." Rather than diminishing at a regular pace, a declining opinion would, she found, suddenly drop to negligible levels, as respondents came to see that this opinion was no longer respectable. Noelle-Neumann's point was that individuals take their cues from broader social trends, as much regarding political opinions as clothing fashions. Most people are reluctant to be out of step. What pollsters measure as public opinion, then, is not simply an aggregation of individual opinions but what sampled individuals understand to be socially acceptable opinions.

Splichal reports that in the ensuing academic controversy, quite a number of American researchers reported they had

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replicated Noelle-Neumann's findings using different data on different issues. Other researchers found that people with firm opinions on particular subjects were much less susceptible to such social influences. Meanwhile, various studies have found that quite sizable segments of the American public do not have clear or accurate ideas about what is the dominant or respectable opinion in the rest of the country. Many people pay no attention to the media or misunderstand media promptings. So we are not sure whether Noelle-Neumann's thesis does have wide application or whether (as some social scientists claim) it is simply catching remote echoes of a phenomenon more characteristic of controlled societies (like Communist or Nazi dictatorships) rather than of modern democracies.

IT is characteristic of Splichal that he does not pursue this interesting dispute down to the level of concrete cases. But examples on both sides of the debate are well known. It is, for instance, well documented that support in America for racial segregation simply disappeared, even in the South, within a few years after federal authorities began to enforce civil rights measures in earnest in the mid 1960s. What had once been the dominant opinion in some areas soon became virtually taboo—in the literal sense that respondents would not admit to such attitudes even if they still held them privately. By contrast, when the Supreme Court sought to license abortion on demand in 1973, it triggered a quarter century of debate, at the end of which polls still show sizable minorities expressing support for total bans on abortion and majorities supporting more constraints than the Court will allow.

Why such differences? No doubt, it matters that prominent political leaders have continued to voice objections to abortion, whereas, by the early 1970s, no prominent political leaders advocated a return to segregation. Perhaps this difference is related, in turn, to the fact that organized churches committed themselves to the fight against abortion whereas no important church was prepared to commit itself, over the long haul, to the defense of racial segregation. But this simply puts the question back a bit. Why did political leaders and churches cling to one view and not the other? Perhaps it made the decisive difference that the defense of segregation seemed irrational because it was contrary to fundamental American principles of liberty and equality whereas opposition to abortion could be defended as an application of American prin-

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ciples: The right to life, as pro-life advocates emphasize, appears in the Declaration of Independence. Do we therefore think that the progress of public opinion is foreordained as a kind of working out of the inner logic of America's founding? Is it, then, not opinion but logic which finally matters most? Not many people share this Hegelian assurance that what is real is rational.

One way or another, as Splichal recognizes, it is hard to think seriously about public opinion without being drawn into philosophic perplexities. Perhaps that is one of the virtues of democracy. Certainly, the relationship was noticed a very long time ago in one of the world's first great democracies. In ancient Athens, the dialogues of Plato depicted philosophy as arising from the investigation of common opinion.

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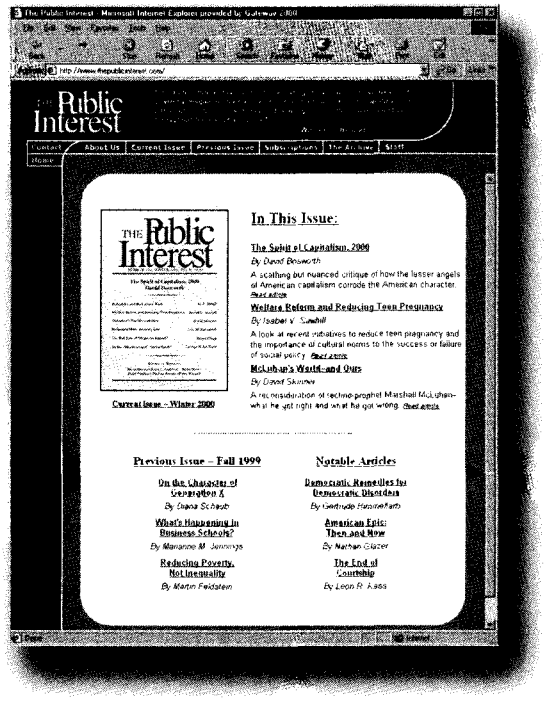

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